

BATMAN



*CREATURE
OF THE NIGHT*

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JOHN PAUL LEON



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BOOK ONE: I SHALL BECOME...



SUDDENLY,
FROM THE SHADOWS,
A WEIRD, EBON-CLOAKED
AVENGER OF VIL STRIKES--!

*Batman was
a hero. For
children.*

YAAA-AA!

I DON'T
THINK SO,
BOYS!

*A little morbid,
perhaps. Bruce
Wayne, orphaned
as a child in a
tragic robbery,
but that wasn't
the point.*

BULLETS
DON'T STOP
HIM!

*The point was that
he devoted his life
to training himself
to physical and
mental perfection,
so he could fight
crime.*

*A harmless
fantasy.*

*Or at least, that's
what I'd have told
you back then.*



My name is Alton Frederick Jepson. But this story concerns my niece's child.



BRUCE?
C'MON, KIDDO.
FINISH UP,
HUH?



UH-HUH...

Bruce Wainwright.

The name was probably why he'd fastened onto Batman so thoroughly.



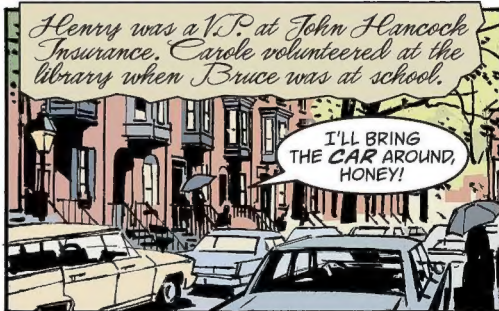
WE'VE GOT TO GO
SOON IF YOU WANT TO HIT
THE ZOO WHILE I DROP
YOUR DAD AT THE
AIRPORT.

YEAH,
OKAY!

Though Carol and Henry were hardly high-society millionaires.



DONE!
I'M GETTING MY
COAT!



Henry was a V.P. at John Hancock Insurance. Carol volunteered at the library when Bruce was at school.

I'LL BRING
THE CAR AROUND,
HONEY!

But I suppose they'd do just fine, if you wanted to imagine them the Waynes of the comic books.



UNCLE
ALFRED!
HEY, UNCLE
ALFRED!

Plus, Bruce had an Alfred.



GOODNESS!
YOU'RE IMMENSE, YOUNG
WAINWRIGHT--HAVE YOU BEEN
GROWING BEHIND MY
BACK?

YOUR
ANCIENT UNCLE
CAN'T LIFT THIS
MUCH ANY
MORE!

*Alton Frederick.
Al... Fred. It
made sense to
an eight-year-
old, at least.*

*I was his great-
uncle. The only
living relative on
either side. I
doted on him,
enjoyed his
energy.*

*Playing Batman games
passed the time, and gave
him a focus for his
boundless imagination.*



*And I swear, he read at
years above his age level,
thanks to all those
comic books.*

ABOUT
AN HOUR,
ALTON.

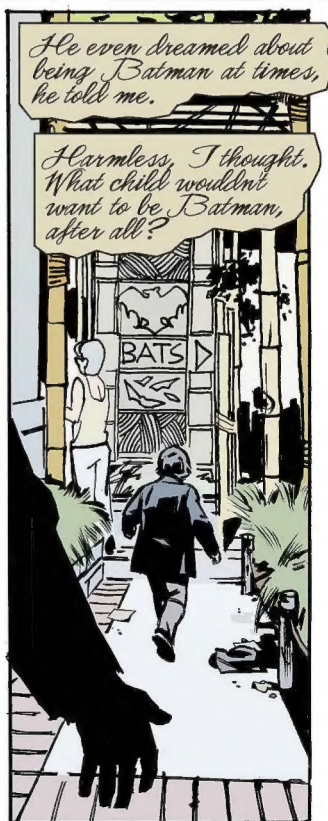
TAKE
YOUR TIME,
DEAR. WE'LL
MEET YOU AT
THE CAFE.



C'MON, LET'S
GO SEE THE
BATS!

AN' CALL
ME "MASTER
BRUCE"!

*He enjoyed being
an almost Batman.
He'd pause when
saying his name, to
separate the "Wain"
and the "wright."*



*He even dreamed about
being Batman at times,
he told me.*

*Harmless, I thought.
What child wouldn't
want to be Batman,
after all?*

It was Halloween Night, 1968, that it happened. Or started. I'm not sure which is more accurate.

40



NA NA
NA NA

NA NA
NA NA

NA NA
NA NA

NA NA
NA NA!

He liked living in Boston, he'd told me.

Properly, Batman should live in New York, because "Gotham" is a nickname for New York, from some old stories by Washington Irving.

(And think of that, an eight-year-old knowing Washington Irving!)

WHAT
DO YOU SAY,
BRUCE?

THANK
YOU! HAPPY
HALLOWEEN!



But New York was Metropolis, too, and that was Superman's home. Boston felt more like Gotham City, he said.



...and danger.

WANNA
STAY OUT
LONGER...

YOU'RE
HALFWAY TO
DREAMLAND
ALREADY, KID.
TIME FOR
HOME.

The old buildings,
the crooked alleyways,
the shadows at night.
It felt like mysteries.
Mysteries...

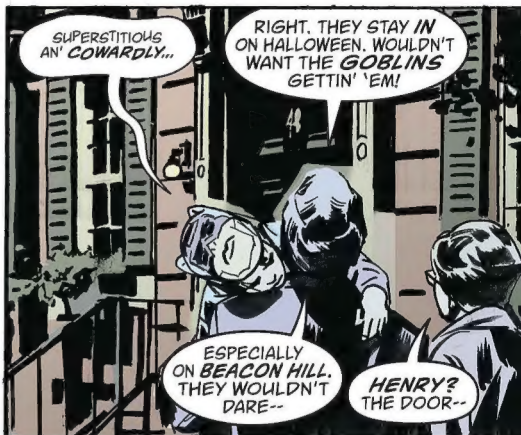


IT'S
COOL AT
NIGHT.

ALL DARK
AN' *SPOOKY*. LIKE
THE *PENGUIN* MIGHT
COME JUMPIN' OUTTA
THE DARK.

OR THE
JKER...

NOT ON
HALLOWEEN, KID.
YOU *KNOW* WHAT
CRIMINALS ARE
LIKE.



SUPERSTITIOUS
AN' COWARDLY...

RIGHT. THEY STAY *IN*
ON HALLOWEEN. WOULDN'T
WANT THE *GOBLINS*
GETTIN' 'EM!

ESPECIALLY
ON *BEACON HILL*.
THEY WOULDN'T
DARE--

HENRY?
THE DOOR--



I
DIDN'T LEAVE
IT OPEN. WHAT'S
GOING--



I DON'T
BELIEVE IT!
WE'VE BEEN--



--HM?

Police reports say they surprised the intruders.

Three or four men, looking for jewelry, valuables, anything easy to carry away and pricey enough to sell to a fence. Your basic smash-and-grab, with some vandalism thrown in.

Henry and Carole surprised them in the front parlor...



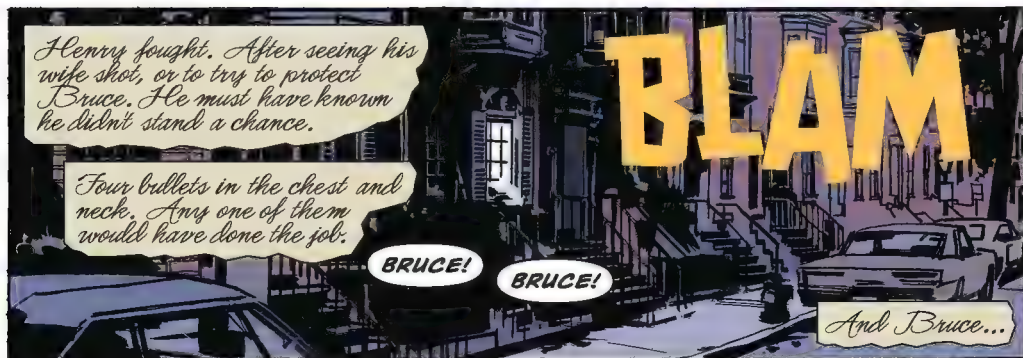
BRUCE!
BRUCE,
RUN--



...but they died in the kitchen.

Carole died first. She was beaten, her jaw broken. Maybe she didn't answer fast enough, didn't tell where more valuables were.

She was shot once, in the forehead.



Henry fought. After seeing his wife shot, or to try to protect Bruce. He must have known he didn't stand a chance.

Four bullets in the chest and neck. Any one of them would have done the job.

BRUCE!


BRUCE!

And Bruce...




BLAM



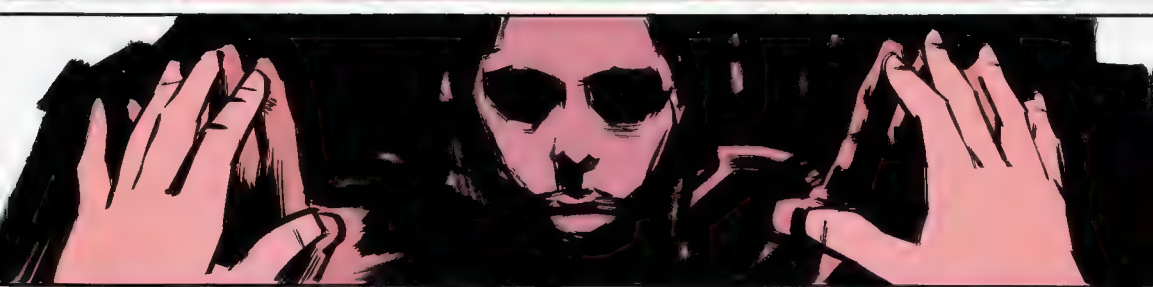


I remember floating. Somewhere dark, but warm.



And I wasn't alone. There was someone. Someone else.

And whoever it was came real close...



...and I could hear him without hearing anything.

SAFE.

YOU SAFE.



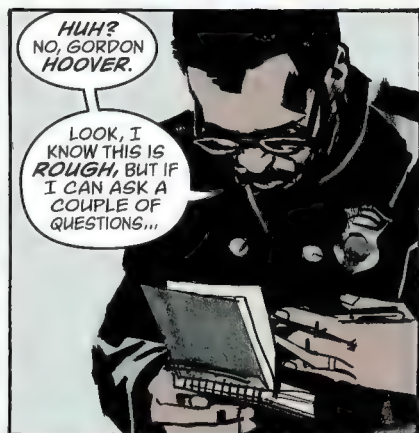
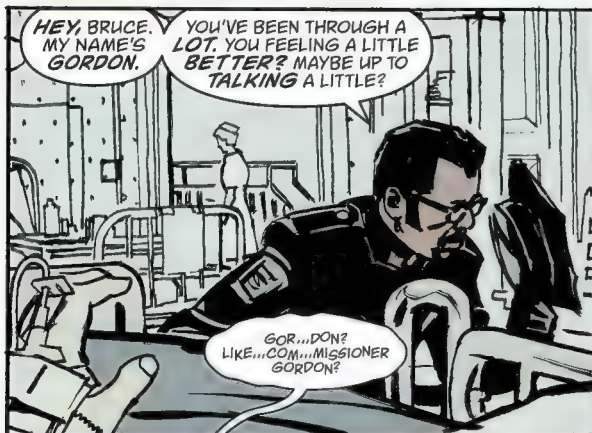
HE'S BACK!
WE HAVE A PULSE!



HE WAS--
HE WAS GONE,
FOR ABOUT FORTY
SECONDS! HE
DIDN'T RESPOND
TO--

HE'S BACK,
NURSE. LET'S SUTURE
HIM UP--
--HE'S
GOING TO BE
FINE.

SAFE.



He wouldn't believe it until he saw the graves. And even then, I don't think he fully accepted it, not at first.

It might have been different if he'd been able to attend the funeral. Had the comfort of ritual, such as it was. But he'd been in a coma almost two months, and no one knew if he'd come out of it.

We hadn't been able to wait. So Carol and Henry... they were just names on granite by then.

He must have felt so terribly lost.



He was moved to a private-care facility for the next six weeks.

And he spent a lot of time writing in his journal.

It had started as a school assignment, but he'd kept going, off and on. Later, Dr. Lester told him it would help organize his thoughts.

Before, his mother would tease him about it sometimes, call it a diary.

He'd howl and complain, saying diaries were girl stuff. It was a journal. A journal!

Afterward...

I GUESS... SHE CAN CALL IT WHATEVER SHE WANTS...

Today, that bone doctor brought me more Batman comics. From when he was a kid, ones I've never seen.

They're pretty good.

But I can't help thinking—

If Batman was real, if Batman had been there—

He could have—he would have—



If I'd been able to take him, if he'd felt like he had family, things might have been different.

Still, the Cornerstone Academy was an excellent school. I'd gone there myself.

It would provide a first-rate education. Give young Bruce the knowledge, connections and standing to do well in life.

Particularly for a boy of his means. His parents had amassed a respectable portfolio, and their insurance made it all the larger.

Still, if I'd been able to take him...

I DON'T WANT TO LIVE HERE!

I WANNA LIVE WITH YOU, UNCLE ALFRED! I WANNA LIVE WITH YOU!

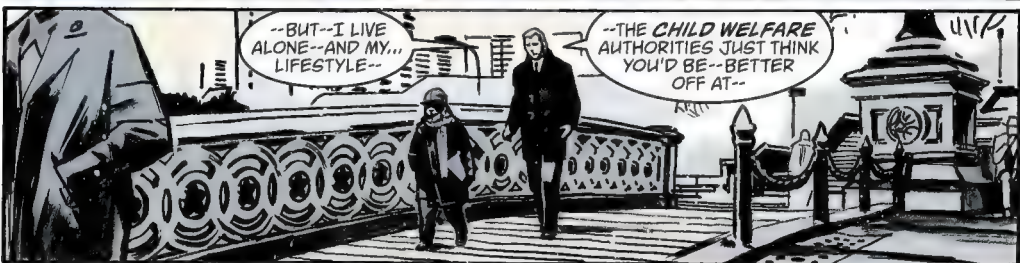
DEAR BOY--

ALFREDDD!

Uncle Alfred's the executor of Mom and Dad's estate. That means he takes care of their money until I grow up.

But he won't take care of me. He doesn't want me.







IT'S NOT
FAIR.



IT'S
NOT!
MOM AND
DAD--
UNCLE
ALFRED--
CORNER-
STONE--
OFFICER
GORDON--



IN THE
COMICS THIS
WOULDN'T--

IT WOULD--

BATMAN
WOULD--



IT
SHOULDN'T
BE LIKE
THIS!

IT
SHOULDN'T
BE LIKE
THIS!



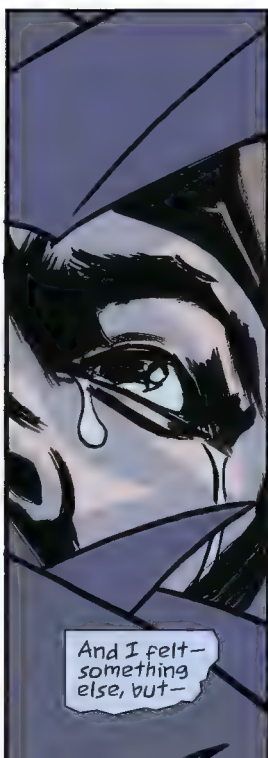
IT
SHOULDN'T
BE--





I felt so angry,
in the bat house.


I felt angry—



And I felt—
something
else, but—







That's when they made me go see Dr. Lester the first time.

I talked to another psychiatrist after I was shot, but just a little.

Dr. Lester asked me a lot of questions. About dreams. About Mom and Dad, how I felt about them being dead.

Well, how did he think I felt?!

I told him I didn't like it here, and mostly what I feel is I want to go home. "Where's that?" he asked.


I figured out he thought I broke the window in the bat house. Everyone thought that.

CHECK WITH THE ZOO PEOPLE IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME. CHECK WITH THE POLICE WHO CAME. THE BUSTED GLASS WAS ALL ON THE OUTSIDE.

THAT'S LIKE A CLUE--IT WAS BROKEN FROM INSIDE!

But he just shook his head and asked me about dreams or his ink cards or something.

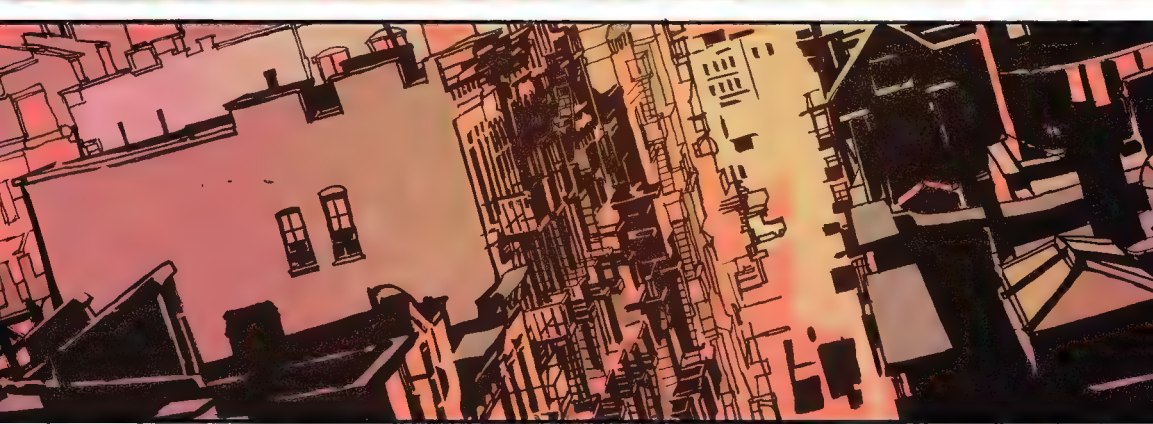
I don't like him. He asks a lot of questions, but he doesn't listen.



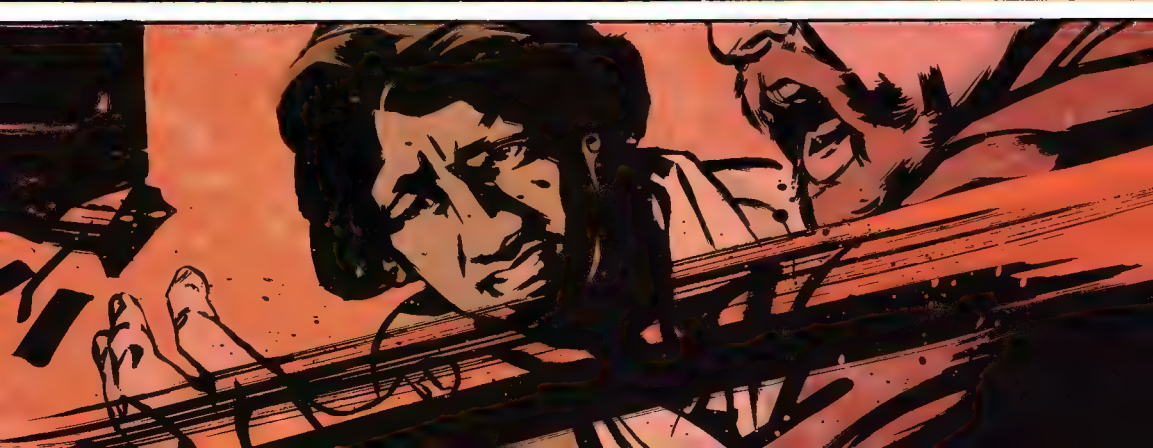
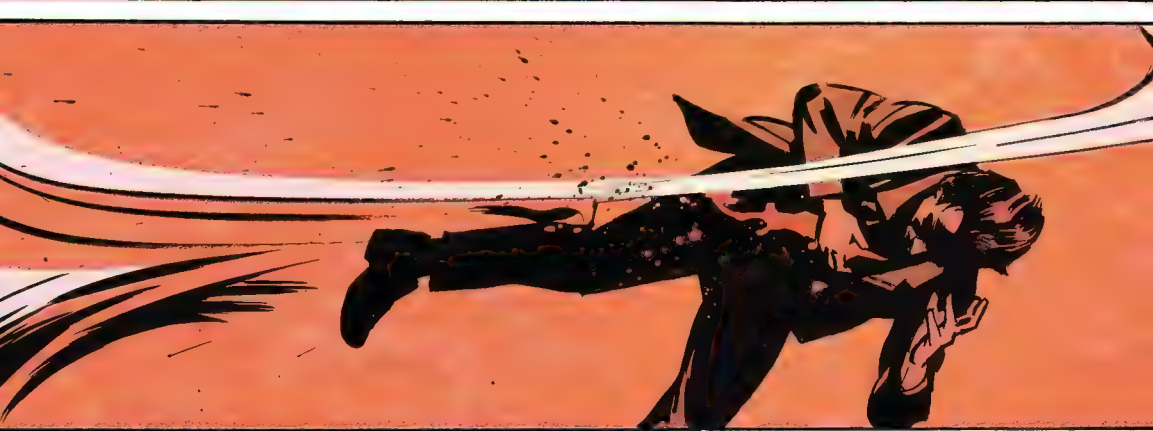
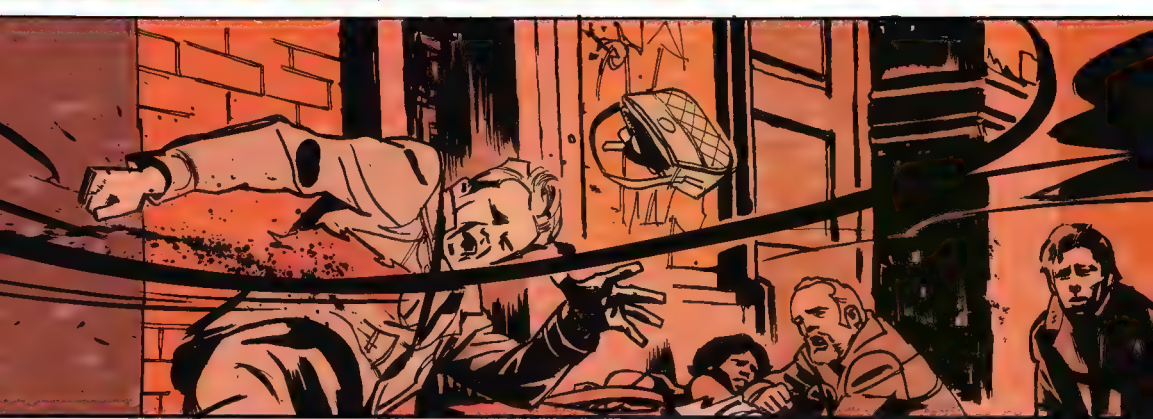
And I do want to go home. I want it more than anything.

And that night--

That night--









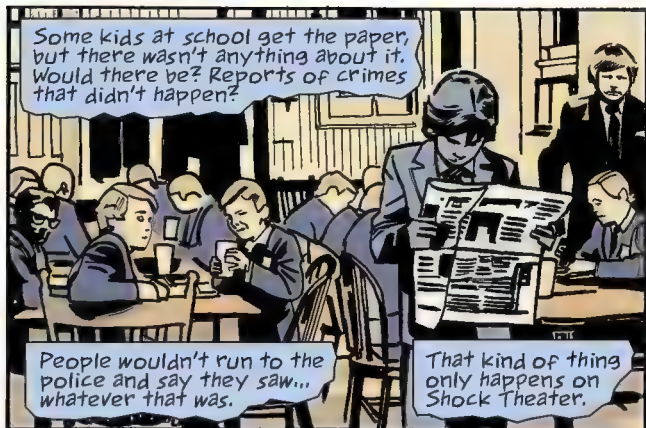


It wasn't a dream.



It was more like—I don't know. A movie? Watching something happen on TV?

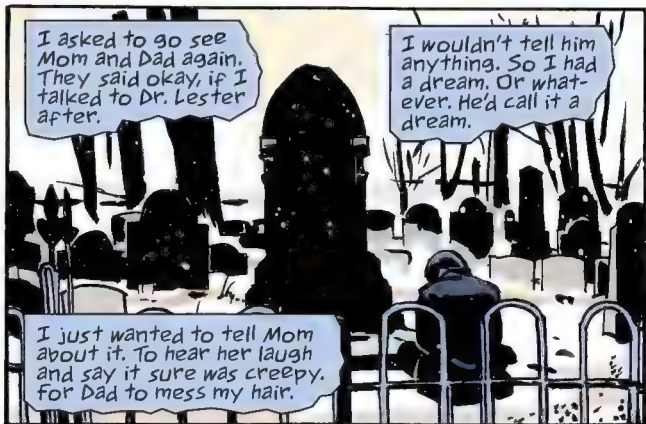
Like watching.



Some kids at school get the paper, but there wasn't anything about it. Would there be? Reports of crimes that didn't happen?

People wouldn't run to the police and say they saw... whatever that was.

That kind of thing only happens on Shock Theater.



I asked to go see Mom and Dad again. They said okay, if I talked to Dr. Lester after.

I wouldn't tell him anything. So I had a dream. Or whatever. He'd call it a dream.

I just wanted to tell Mom about it. To hear her laugh and say it sure was creepy. For Dad to mess my hair.



It's not fair. All of it.

It's just not fair.

In the summer, Bruce went to France with a school group.

By ship, not by plane.

There were classes. Some history, some French.

And in France we saw the Louvre Museum and Notre Dame and the Eiffel Tower.

And we took a bus to some place with a bridge where some guy painted water lilies.

It was an "educational opportunity," they said.

Afterward, they went to a ranch in Arizona. There were riding lessons, nature studies.

But I think Bruce figured it out. That these were the children whose parents were dead. Or traveling. Or busy.

The riding and lessons were just something to do, because they didn't have homes to go to.

They didn't want us. So they sent us away.

So I went places and learned things and saw stuff. I learned to dress nice and to ride and to dance.

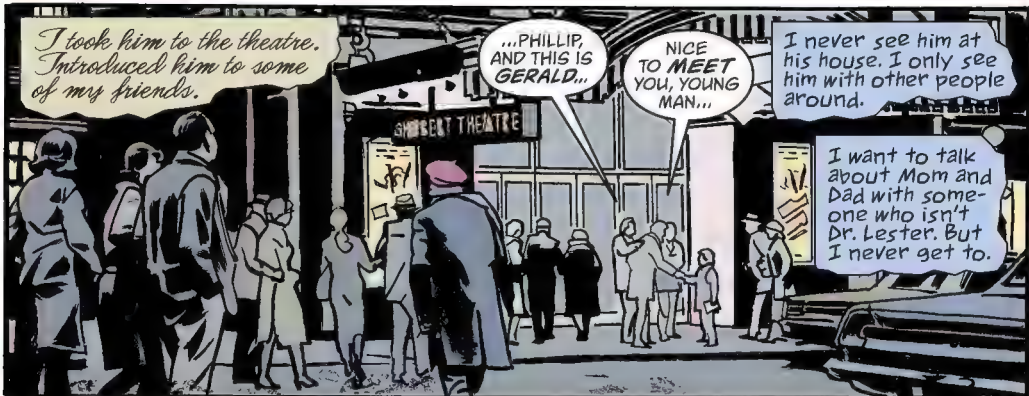
I learned to be polite.



When he got home for the fall term, I told him he could just call me "Alfred" now. I tried to spend time with him.

I saw him at Cornerstone.

I saw him at the zoo. Twice.



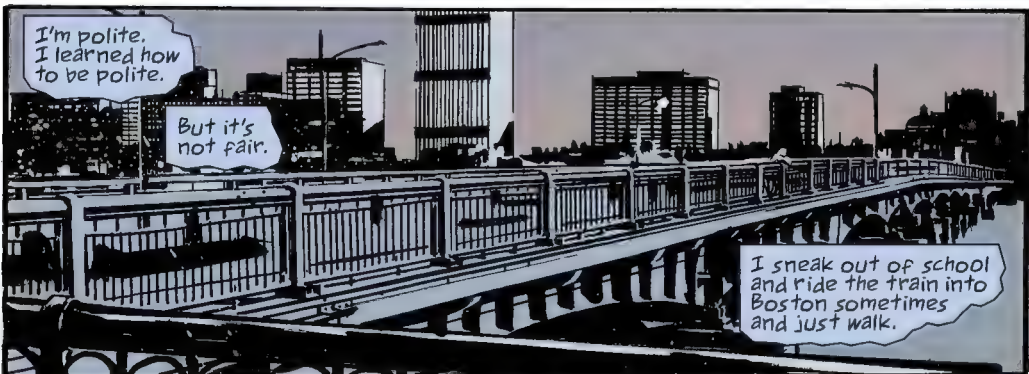
I took him to the theatre. Introduced him to some of my friends.

...PHILLIP, AND THIS IS GERALD...

NICE TO MEET YOU, YOUNG MAN...

I never see him at his house. I only see him with other people around.

I want to talk about Mom and Dad with someone who isn't Dr. Lester. But I never get to.



I'm polite. I learned how to be polite.

But it's not fair.

I sneak out of school and ride the train into Boston sometimes and just walk.




I want to go home.

I want to be somewhere I don't have to be polite and careful and don't have to be nice to people.

Where I

Where I



I wasn't even
asleep the next
time it happened.

There was a house. A big house. I couldn't see it, but it was there.

I lived there. But I couldn't reach it.

There were thorns.

A couple nights later, though—

I had to keep pushing through, I had to reach my house.

I had to—

And then—

I couldn't see their faces, not at first—

WH-WHO ARE--?

WE'RE YOUR PARENTS, BRUCE.

HENRY AND CAROLE WAINWRIGHT.



NO! YOU'RE THE WAYNES! FROM THE COMIC BOOKS!

NO.

YOU JUST CAN'T REMEMBER OUR FACES, KIDDO. THE MAN WHO KILLED US GOT AWAY, AND YOU'RE FORGETTING US.

SO IN YOUR MIND, YOU'RE GIVING US THESE.

NO! I DO REMEMBER YOUR FACES!

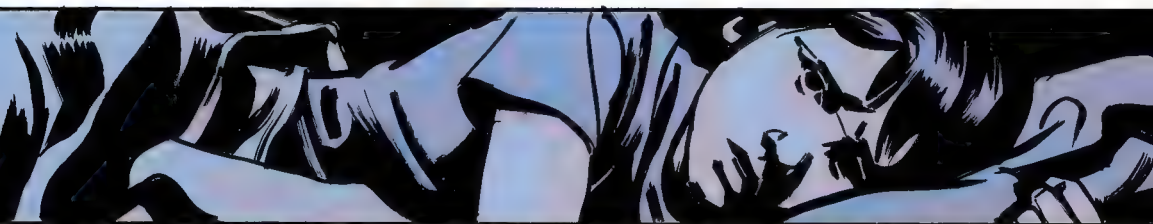
YOU DON'T.

ALL THAT GOING TO PARIS AND PLAYS AND RIDING HORSES...

NO!

NO!

I could remember! I did remember! And I made them—made their faces—



That time, it was a dream.

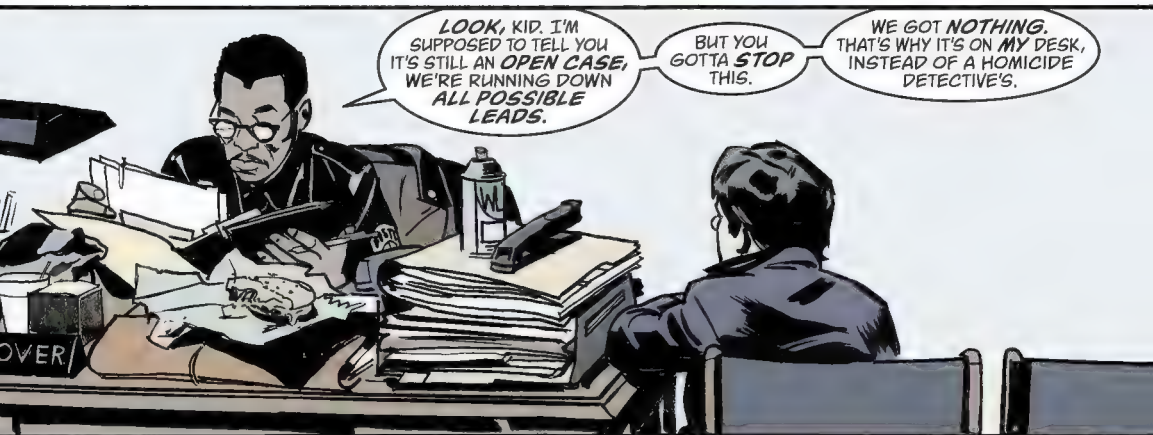
Were they right? Was I forgetting them? I thought about them all the time, but—

I had to do something. They were Mom and Dad.



BUT
OFFICER GOR--
OFFICER HOOVER.
IT'S BEEN ALMOST
A YEAR.

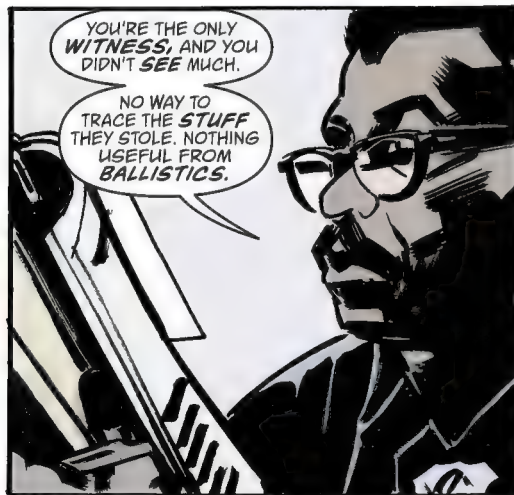
THERE'S
GOTTA BE
SOMETHING,
RIGHT?



LOOK, KID, I'M
SUPPOSED TO TELL YOU
IT'S STILL AN OPEN CASE,
WE'RE RUNNING DOWN
ALL POSSIBLE
LEADS.

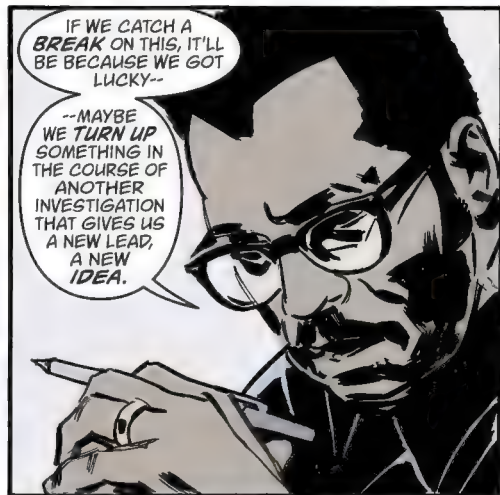
BUT YOU
GOTTA STOP
THIS.

WE GOT NOTHING.
THAT'S WHY IT'S ON MY DESK,
INSTEAD OF A HOMICIDE
DETECTIVE'S.



YOU'RE THE ONLY
WITNESS, AND YOU
DIDN'T SEE MUCH.

NO WAY TO
TRACE THE STUFF
THEY STOLE. NOTHING
USEFUL FROM
BALLISTICS.



IF WE CATCH A
BREAK ON THIS, IT'LL
BE BECAUSE WE GOT
LUCKY--

--MAYBE
WE TURN UP
SOMETHING IN
THE COURSE OF
ANOTHER
INVESTIGATION
THAT GIVES US
A NEW LEAD,
A NEW
IDEA.



BUT...



I GET IT, OFFICER HOOVER.

THANKS FOR YOUR TIME.



Another investigation. He meant another crime.

Maybe someone else's mom and dad killed. And that might tell them something.

They'd call that lucky. It didn't sound lucky.



...SAYS IT WAS A MONSTAH, PETE--BIG SHADOWY WINGED THING WITH GLOWIN' EYES.

RIPPED UP THREE OF HIS GOONS, HE SAYS. WANTS US TA PROTECT HIM.

SAMPLING HIS OWN MERCHANDISE...



HE SAID IT WAS ALL "GRAAAA"--



I tried to calm myself. To clear my mind, like Dr. Lester said. If it was out there—

I reached out, trying to feel it again, to see it.

Over the rooftops, in the shadows, in the dark places. Moving like water, like smoke. And I saw—

And didn't just see, this time—

HUH?

WHAT IN GOD'S--?

BLAM

BLAM BLAM

BLA

The guy who killed Mom and Dad. Someone knew. Somewhere. Someone—

H-ACCKH!

H A L L O W E E N



ROBBERY



TWO
DEAD.
BEACON
HILL.



WHO?



W H O ? !



He—it—saw things.
In their eyes, in
their brains.

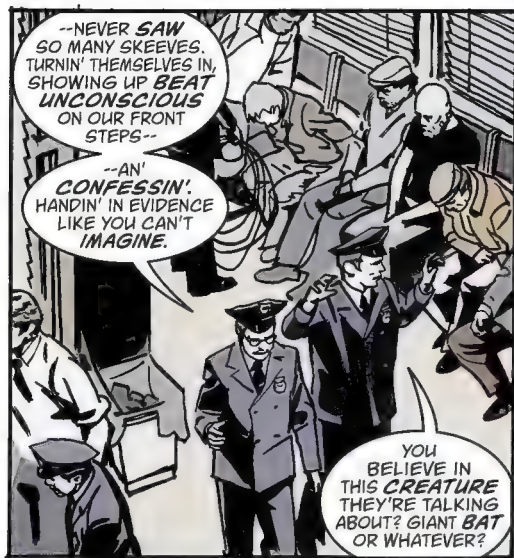
I saw some of
them, too. Just
glimpses.

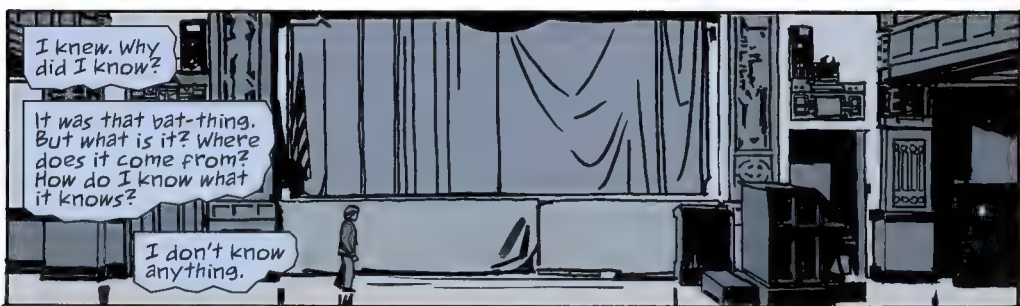
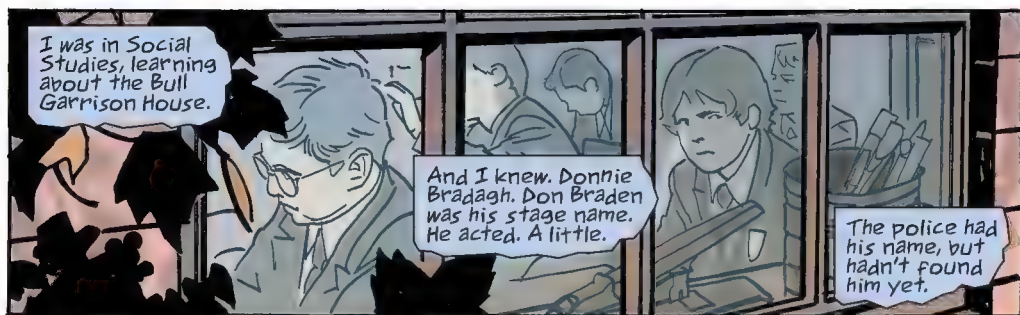


Things they'd have
never told the police.
It made them know they
should tell. Tell every-
thing. Or it'd be back.



Most didn't know
anything about
Mom and Dad. A
few, though—a
few had heard
things—



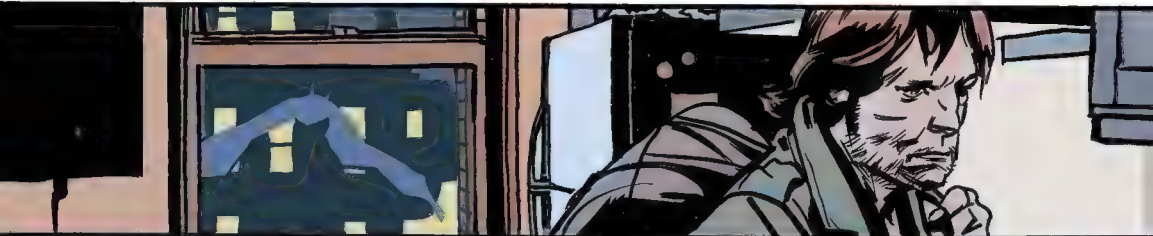


His name was Donald Bradagh, they told me.

He'd been preparing to run. He'd heard something on the street; the police were making a lot of arrests, people he knew.

They hadn't come to talk to him yet, but they were planning to.

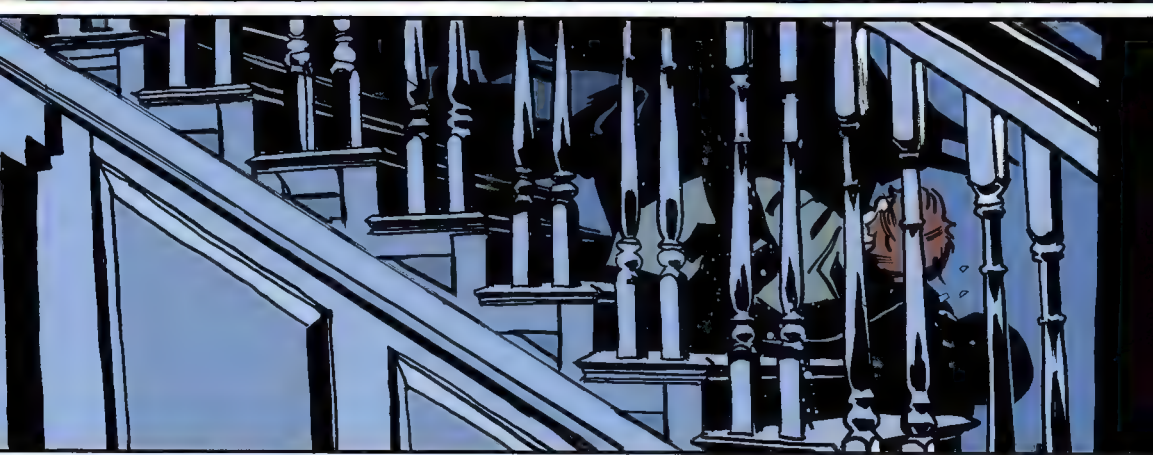
He had a bus ticket, for Los Angeles.

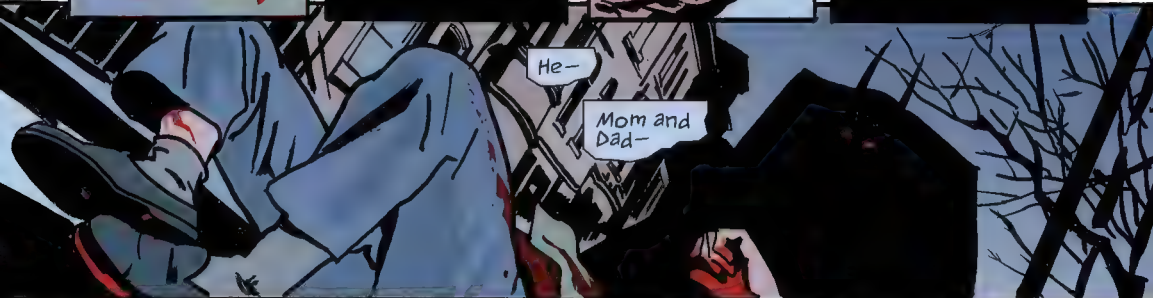
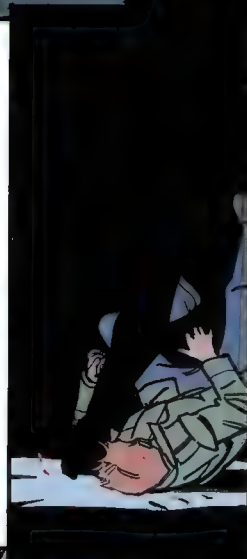


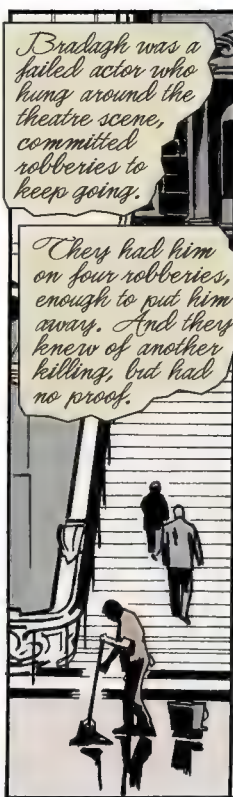
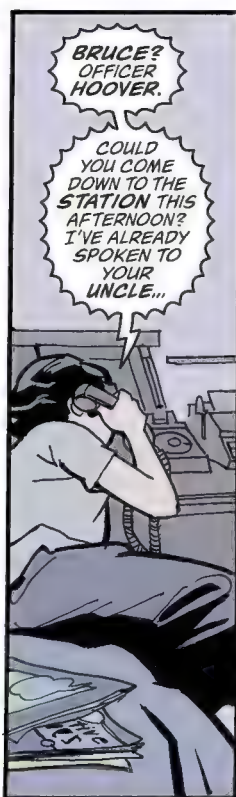
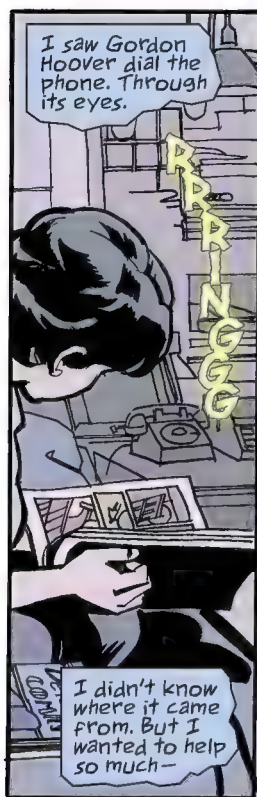
BRADAGH.

He was running. We saw it in his eyes.

AAAAAHHH!









I knew him right away. From the fight, from last night, when the bat-creature caught up with him.

That first night, it was dark, the light was behind him.

I knew what the police had said to each other. He was in the area, it fit the pattern. They were 95% sure it was him.



They just needed me so they could prove it in court.

IT'S HIM. NUMBER THREE.

ARE YOU SURE, KID? HE'S THE MAN YOU SAW WHO--

NUMBER THREE. HE'S THE ONE.





ALL
RIGHT, WE'RE
DONE.

TELL THE
OTHERS THEY CAN
TAKE THOSE FAKE
BANDAGES OFF,
AND RETURN
BRADAGH TO
THE--



BRUCE, WAIT!
DON'T GO OUT
THERE!

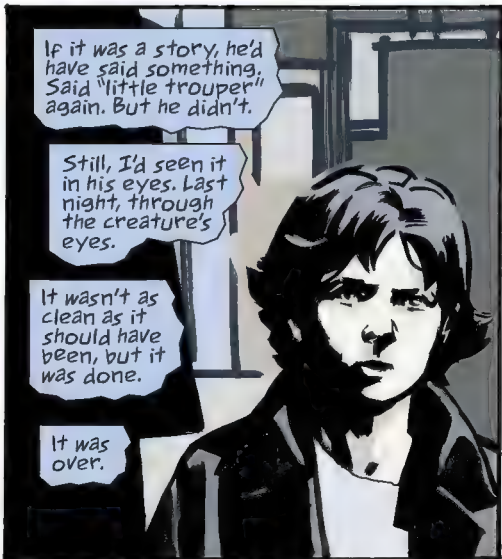
THEY'LL
STILL BE IN
THE--



BRUCE!



It was him.
The way his
shoulders
went, his
hair. I'm
almost
sure.



If it was a story, he'd
have said something.
Said "little trouper"
again. But he didn't.

Still, I'd seen it
in his eyes. Last
night, through
the creature's
eyes.

It wasn't as
clean as it
should have
been, but it
was done.

It was
over.

Bruce began going to the zoo again. I took him, sometimes.

It had been some time since the bats. They'd agreed to allow him into the bat house again without somebody to watch him.



I watched the bats for a long time, and told myself again it was over. But it didn't feel over.

Maybe I wasn't completely sure it was Braddagh. Maybe it was the way it felt to make the connection, to catch him.

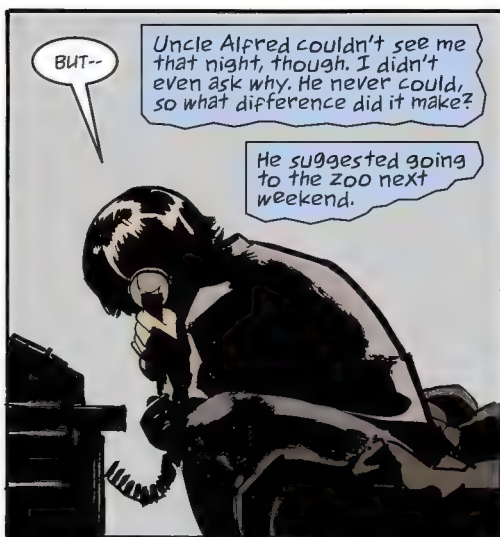
But the feeling wasn't gone.



I couldn't think.
Couldn't read.

I felt strange.
I needed to talk
to someone.

I knew if I could talk
about it, let it out, it'd
be over. Whatever it
was, I'd be done.



BUT--

Uncle Alfred couldn't see me
that night, though. I didn't
even ask why. He never could,
so what difference did it make?

He suggested going
to the zoo next
weekend.



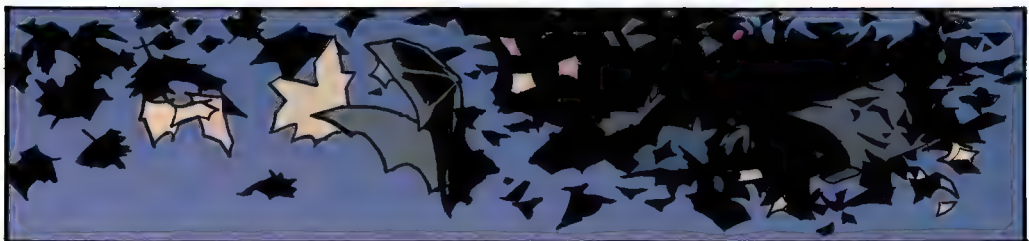
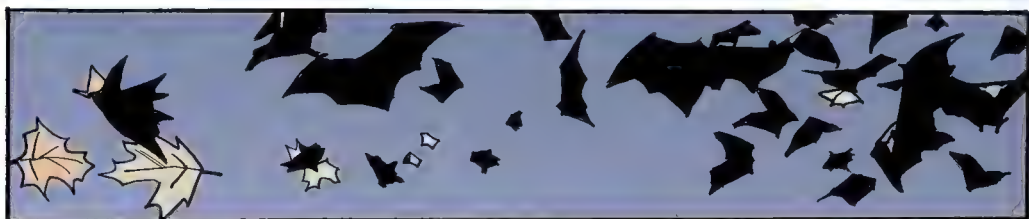
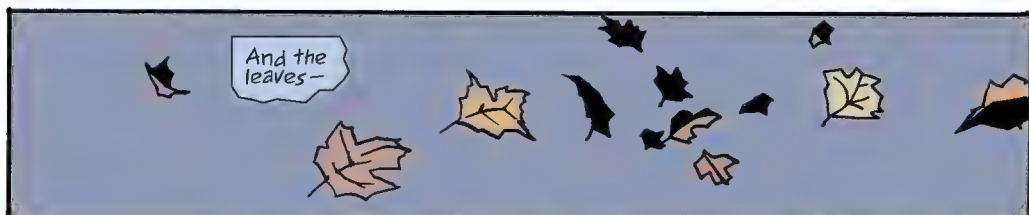
But I had to talk to
someone. And not
Dr. Lester.

And after
a while--



I felt like I needed
to be on the roof.

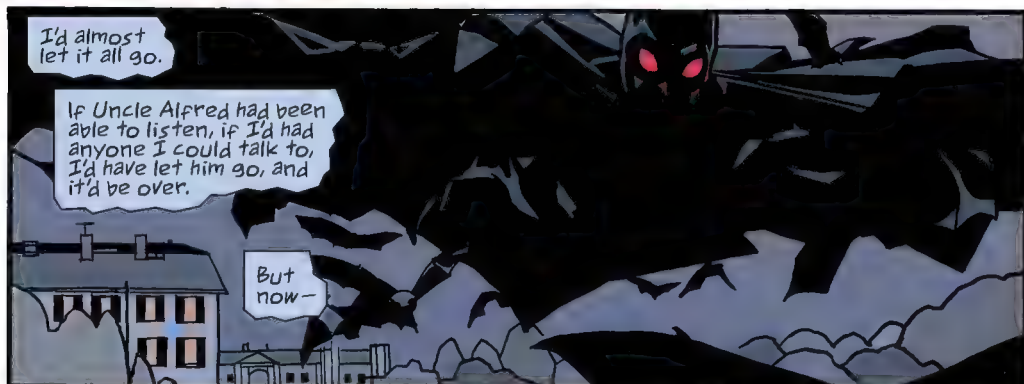
It was windy.
It was cold--















JPLEON



BOOK TWO: **BOY WONDER**

QUICKLY, ROBIN!
LIKE LUMBERJACKS ON A RIVER,
LOGROLLING THEIR HAUL!

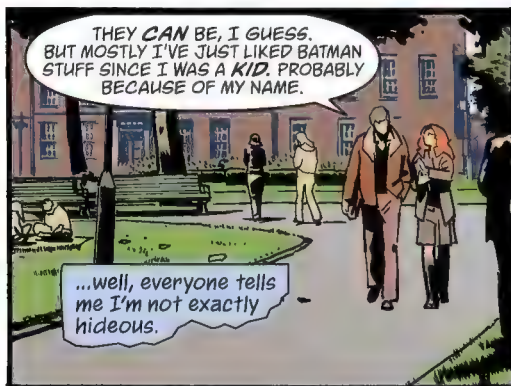
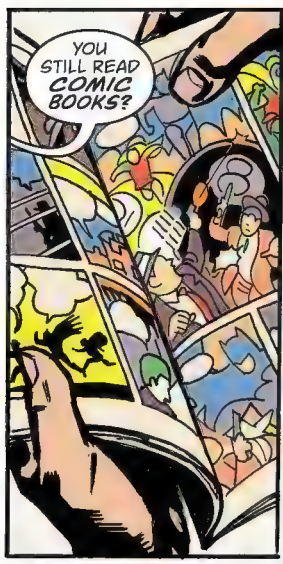
HA HA! BOSS SNOOKER
AND HIS GANG TRIED TO CRUSH
US WITH THESE--BUT NOW
THEY'RE THE ONES BEHIND
THE EIGHT BALL!

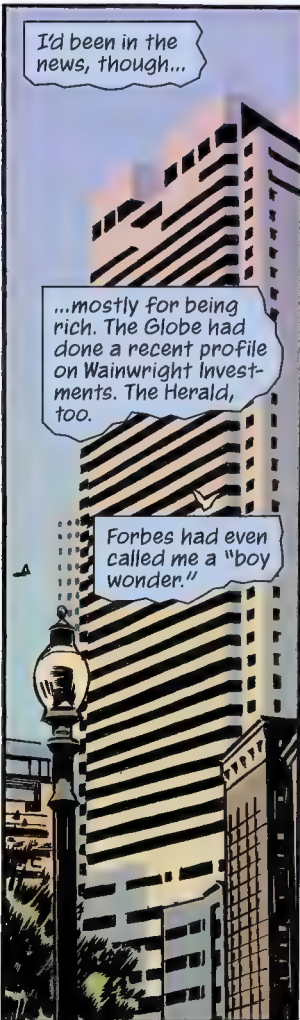
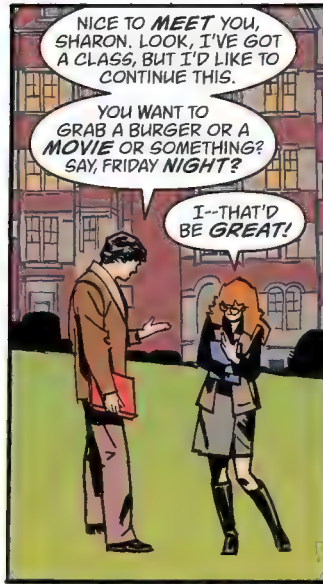
It was fun,
that was
the thing.

BLAM!
BLAM!

AAH!
NO!
NO!!

It was fun, so I didn't think it through.
Wouldn't have known where to start, even.
And everything...everything had been
going so well.





**BLAM
BLAM**

**UP
THERE! UP
THERE!**

...I had the
really important
one covered.

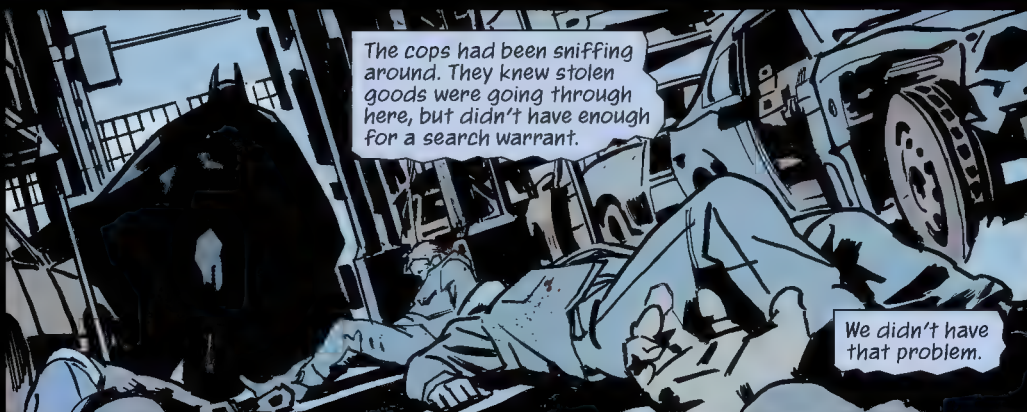
We'd found the Doolin
operation two nights
ago, he and I.

A chop shop handling
stolen cars taken from
all over the city. One of
several, a big, professional
organization. The police
hadn't been able to get a
handle on them yet.

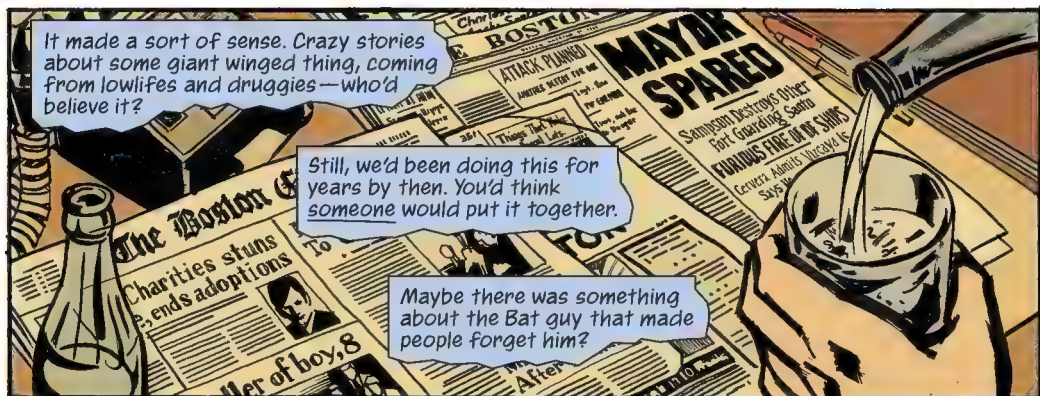
**WHAT
IS IT, WHAT
IN HELL IS
IT?**

HAA--

He killed the lights before
he went in. Aside from
scaring the crap out of
them, it makes it hard to
see what they're up
against.



We didn't have that problem.





...I'd come up with a way to keep them happy, too.



There wouldn't be any trail past the chop shop—no links to the bigger operation.

But Batman and I—we'd seen the head man come through.

Seen him look through the license plates from the stolen cars. Handle them.



His fingerprints would connect him to stolen cars. That'd lead the cops to his other properties. Including the rest of the chop shops.



Another feather in the cap of my old pal "Officer Gordon."



My uncle Alfred—
well, Alton Frederick,
really, Alton Frederick
Jepson—

AH, **BRUCE!**
WE WERE JUST
TALKING ABOUT
YOU!

—he'd done
well, too.



He'd founded
Wainwright
Investments
in 1969...

...as a way of taking care of my
parents' estate and keeping it
healthy until I inherited.

I HAVEN'T
DONE SOMETHING
STUPID AGAIN,
HAVE I?

He'd done a lot more
than keep it healthy.

And I was proud that, since I
started working there along-
side school—the heir apparent
learning the ropes—we'd
gotten healthier and healthier.



HA! NO, NOT STUPID AT
ALL. IN FACT, I'M STARTING
TO THINK YOU'RE LEADING A
CHARMED LIFE. YOU
REMEMBER **PENNYSWORTH**
MANUFACTURING?

YOU WANTED TO
INVEST, THE BOARD
DIDN'T SEE IT?

WELL, THEY JUST
CAME **THROUGH**.
BIG TIME.



THEY
DID?

"A STROKE OF
LUCK, REALLY.

"A FREIGHTER FROM GERMANY CARRYING
HEAVY MACHINERY FOUNDERED IN AN
UNEXPECTED STORM JUST OFF ICELAND.
NO ONE **KILLED**, THANK GOD.

"THE MACHINERY WAS FOR **DANVERS
TOOL & DIE**. IT'LL TAKE **MONTHS** TO
REPLACE, SO THEY HAD TO BACK OUT
OF A CONTRACT WITH RAYTHEON FOR
BERYLLIUM SPRINGS--

--AND OUR BOYS AT
PENNSYBORTH, WHO ALREADY
HAVE THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT,
PICKED UP A **17-MILLION-DOLLAR
CONTRACT** AND THE INSIDE
TRACK FOR **FUTURE
BUSINESS**.

SO WE'VE
GOT **YOU** TO THANK,
BRUCE.

**CLAP CLAP CLAP
CLAP CLAP CLAP**

HHH.

**CLAP CLAP
CLAP CLAP**

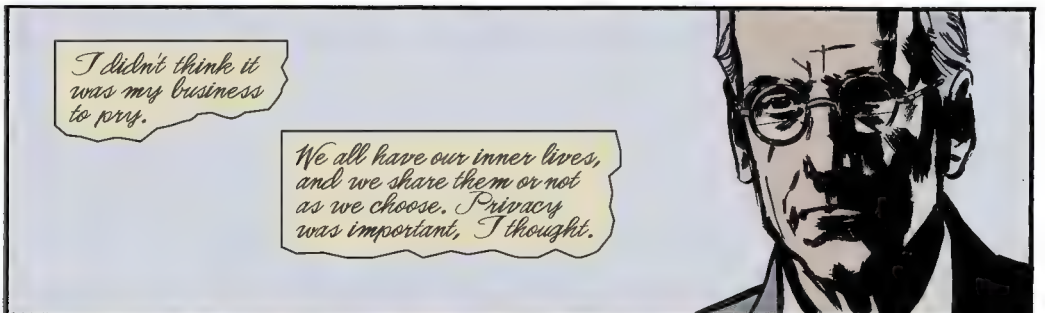
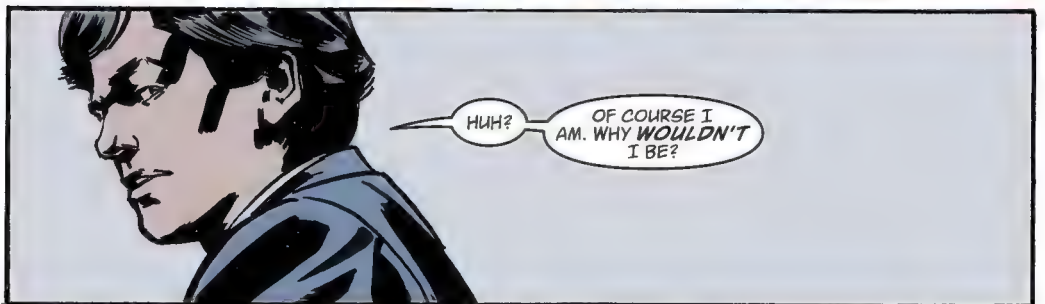
TO BE HONEST,
I JUST LIKED THE
NAME...

HAHAHAHAHAHA

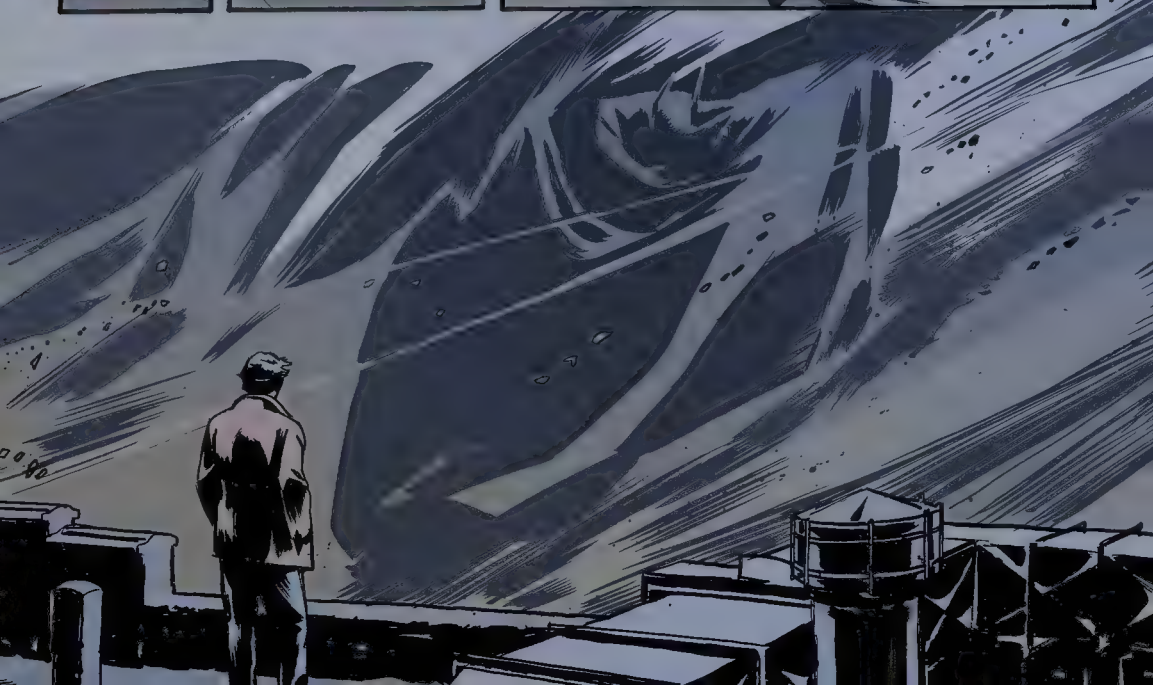
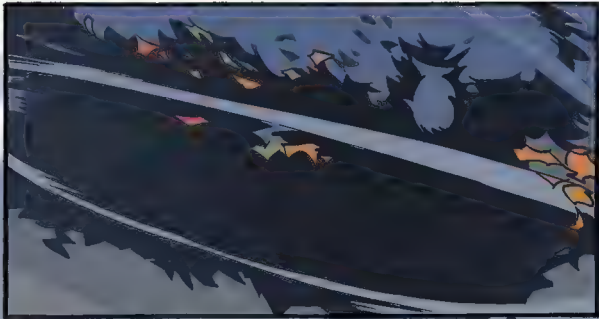
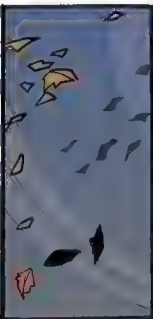
AH,
BRUCE, YOU
KIDDER...

*That was
Bruce,
back then.*

*A very sharp mind, and learning
fast. But unpredictable. Sometimes
whimsical, even naive. But he was
bustling quite a track record.*







YOU'RE...
SAFE?

GOOD.

I still don't know where
he'd come from. But he'd
been manifesting like
this since I was nine.

I'd wished for
someone like him,
wished so hard...

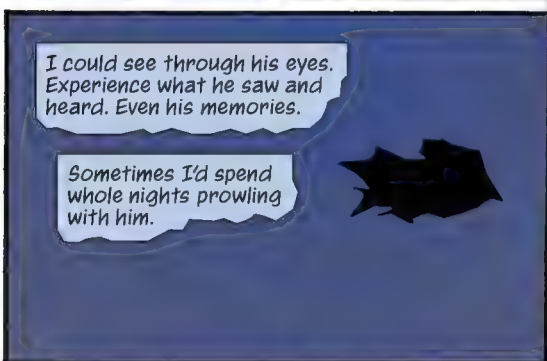
It had become a ritual, with us. He'd make sure I
was safe. Then he'd go, out on the night's work.
Out into the dark—

UM...

I'M
SAFE.

ARE...
ARE YOU
OKAY?

HOW'S IT
GOING OUT
THERE?





But it was big, too.

A big secret, one that was always with me.

And not one I could share with anyone. I tried, a couple of times...

AN AVENGING ANGEL, REPRESSING THE WORLD'S ILLS, MAKING EVERYTHING COME OUT RIGHT? MAKING THINGS FAIR?

EASY TO SEE WHY IT'D BE A COMFORTING FANTASY FOR YOU, BRUCE, BUT IT'S ESSENTIALLY JUVENILE. YOU NEED TO LET GO, COPE WITH THE REAL WORLD...



WHAT, YOU PRETEND TO BE BATMAN? KINKY.

YOU HAVE A COSTUME? MAYBE A ROBIN COSTUME?

NO, NO-- IT'S NOT LIKE THAT--

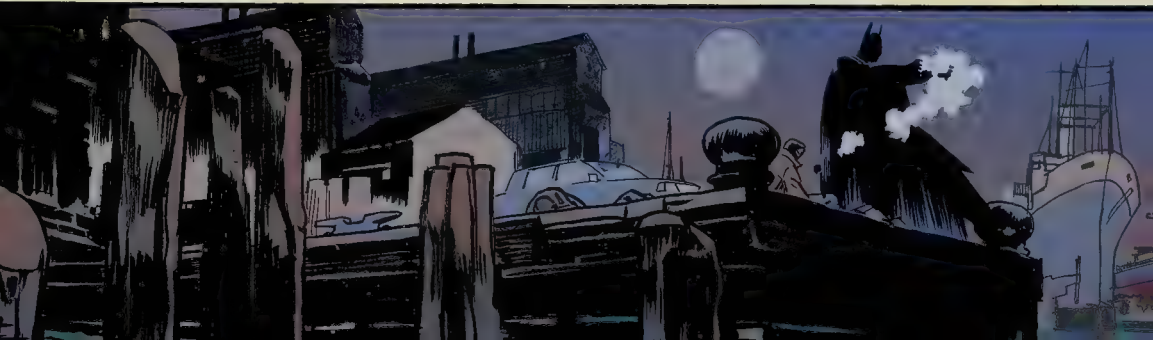


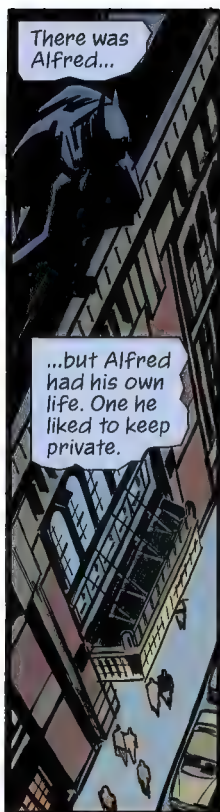
...AND IF HE WAS THERE, IF HE COULD HAVE BEEN THERE ON HALLOWEEN.

THAT'S WHAT I KEEP WONDERING. IF I CAN CALL HIM, WHY COULDN'T I HAVE CALLED HIM THEN?

...but I didn't know what to say. How to tell anyone without looking like a lunatic.

Didn't even know where to start.





There was Alfred...

...but Alfred had his own life. One he liked to keep private.



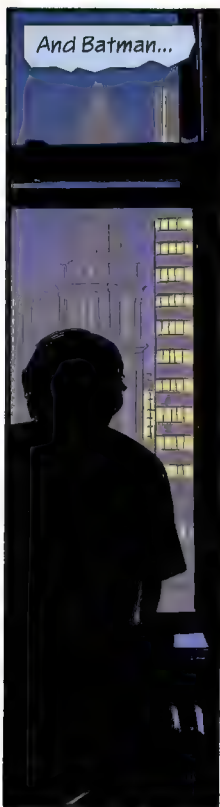
I used to think Alfred didn't want me in his life. Didn't want to be burdened.

It took a while to figure out. I didn't know Bay Village was a gay neighborhood, back then.

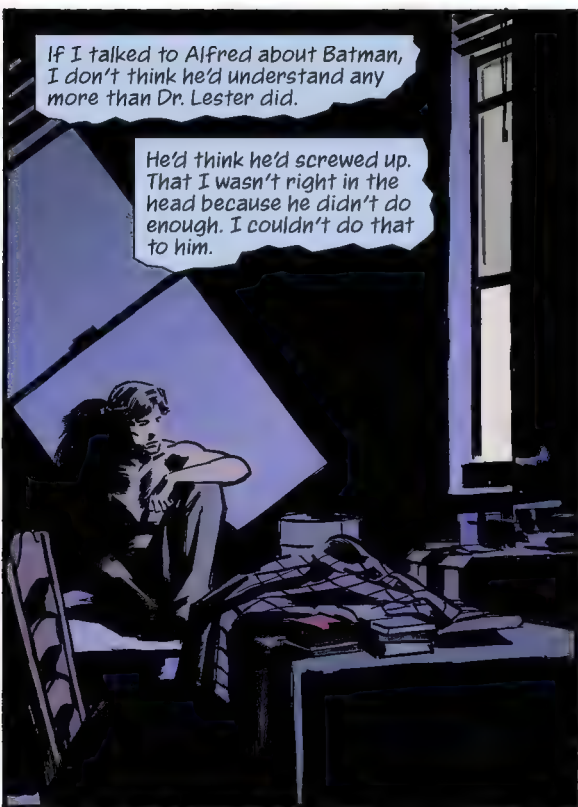
But all his friends were men, and their private jokes, the way they'd look at each other...

Those weren't easy times for gay men, and the trouble he'd have brought down, raising a little kid in that world in the late Sixties...

I thought he was abandoning me. But he'd done everything he could.



And Batman...



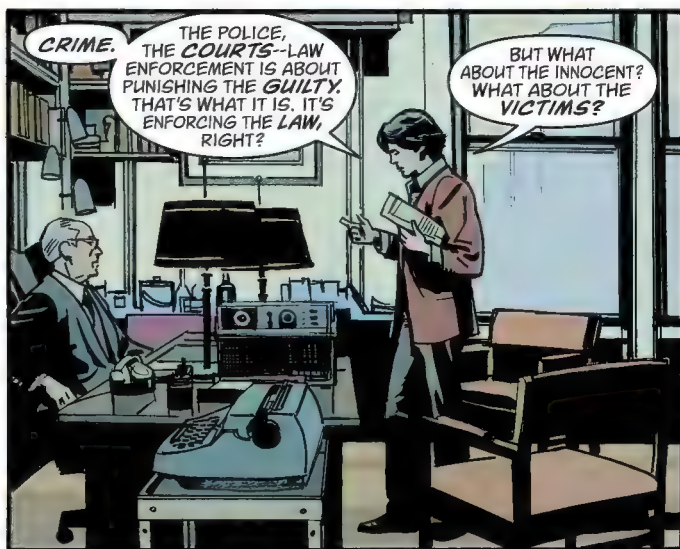
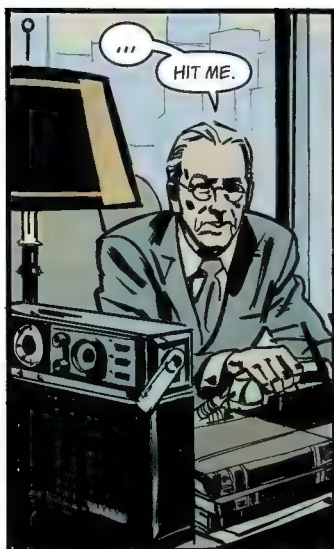
If I talked to Alfred about Batman, I don't think he'd understand any more than Dr. Lester did.

He'd think he'd screwed up. That I wasn't right in the head because he didn't do enough. I couldn't do that to him.



Still. It would have been nice to talk to someone.







DON'T WORRY. I DON'T WANT TO THROW AWAY **ALL** THE MONEY. BUT IT'S ONE OF MY **BATMAN** THINGS, I GUESS.

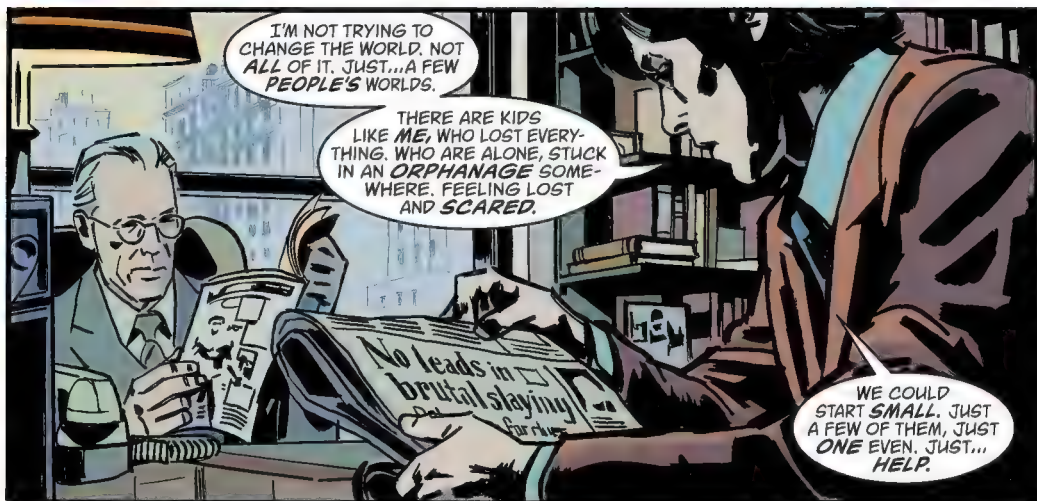
THERE WAS AN ISSUE, BACK IN 1968...



...BRUCE WAYNE DID SOMETHING LIKE THIS, SET UP **V.I.P.**--VICTIMS INCORPORATED PROGRAM--TO HELP PEOPLE HARMED BY **CRIME**.

IT'S KIND OF A **STUPID** NAME.

BUT I READ THAT ISSUE OVER AND OVER AGAIN, THOSE FIRST FEW YEARS. AND IT'S NOT--IT'S NOT A **BAD IDEA**.



I'M NOT TRYING TO CHANGE THE WORLD. NOT **ALL** OF IT. JUST...A FEW **PEOPLE'S** WORLDS.

THERE ARE KIDS LIKE **ME**, WHO LOST EVERYTHING. WHO ARE ALONE, STUCK IN AN **ORPHANAGE** SOMEWHERE. FEELING LOST AND **SCARED**.

WE COULD START **SMALL**. JUST A FEW OF THEM, JUST **ONE** EVEN. JUST... **HELP**.



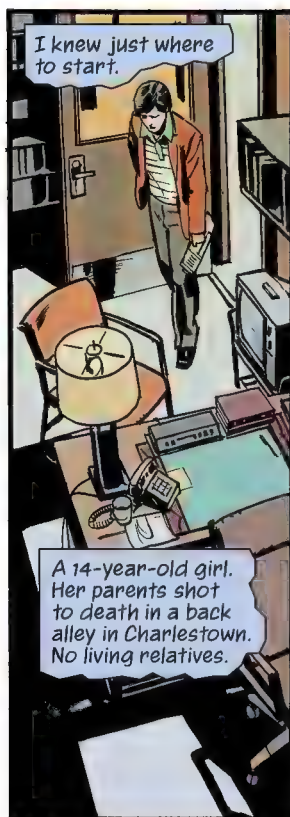
YOU'RE A **GOOD** MAN, BRUCE. LET'S TRY IT. BUT **YES**, LET'S START **SMALL**. A PILOT PROGRAM. **ONE** CHILD, AND WE'LL SEE HOW IT GOES.

TALK TO **BOB CARSON**. HE'LL KNOW HOW TO SET IT **UP**.

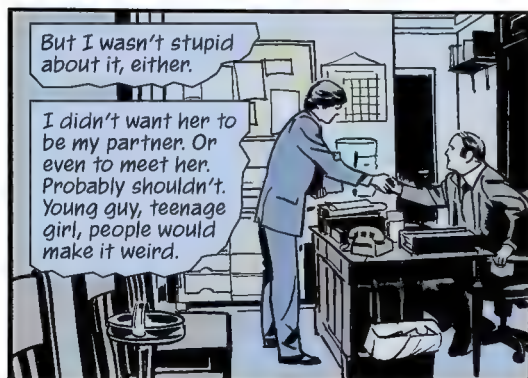


THANKS, ALFRED!

IT'S GONNA **WORK**, YOU'LL SEE!



A 14-year-old girl. Her parents shot to death in a back alley in Charlestown. No living relatives.

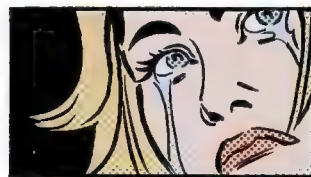
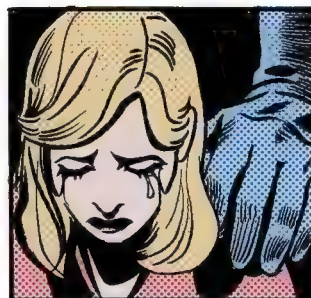
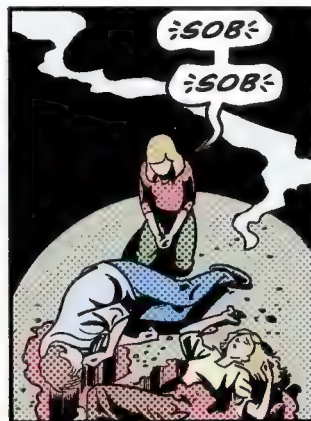




And I just wanted
her to know—
that for all that it
was big and scary
and unending—

I knew what she'd
lost. I knew how
she felt.

I knew how
overwhelmed
she was.



—she
wasn't
alone.





It felt...
good.

He'd said there
was so much out
there, so much
to fight.

He was Batman, though,
he could handle it. But
that didn't mean he
should have to do
it alone, right?

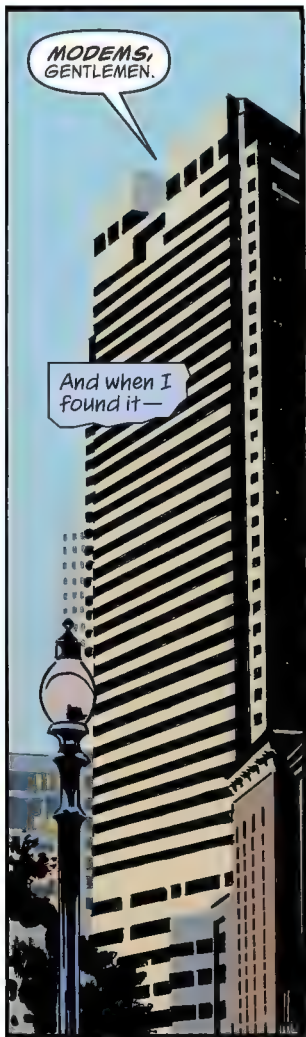
This was my town.
Our town. And we
were going to fix
it. Make things
right.

Do some
good.



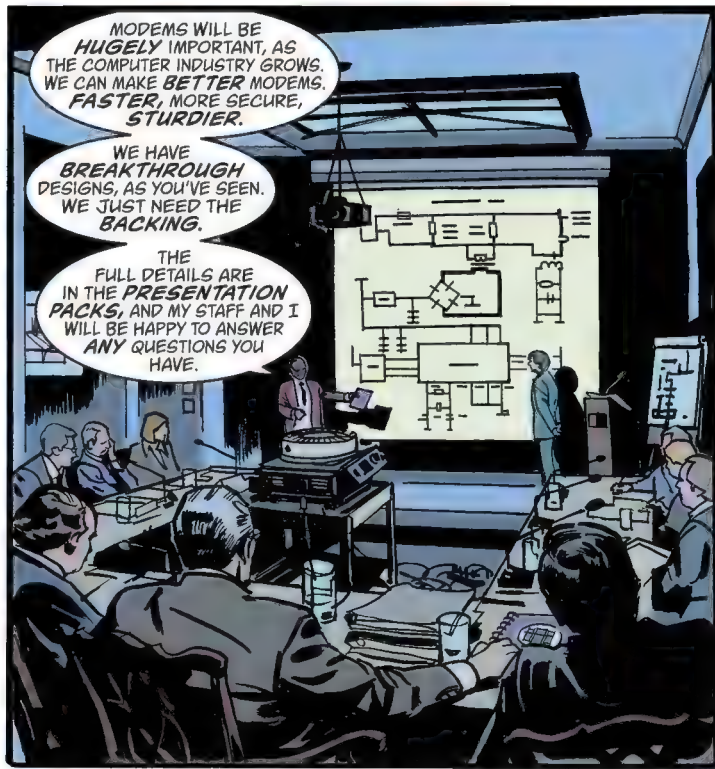
But I didn't stop there.
I wanted to do more.

I talked to as many people as
I could, looking for the right
proposal, the right business
opportunity.



MODEMS,
GENTLEMEN.

And when I
found it—



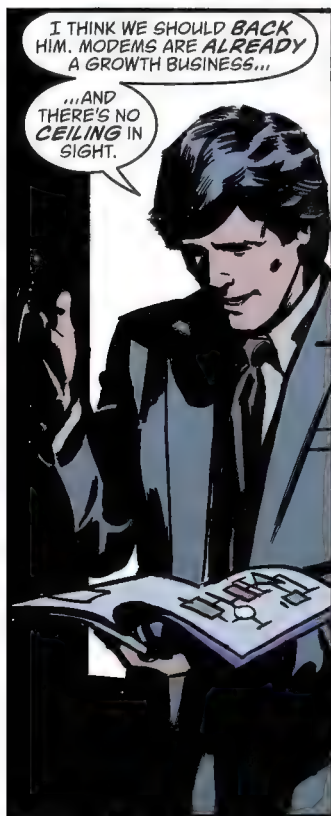
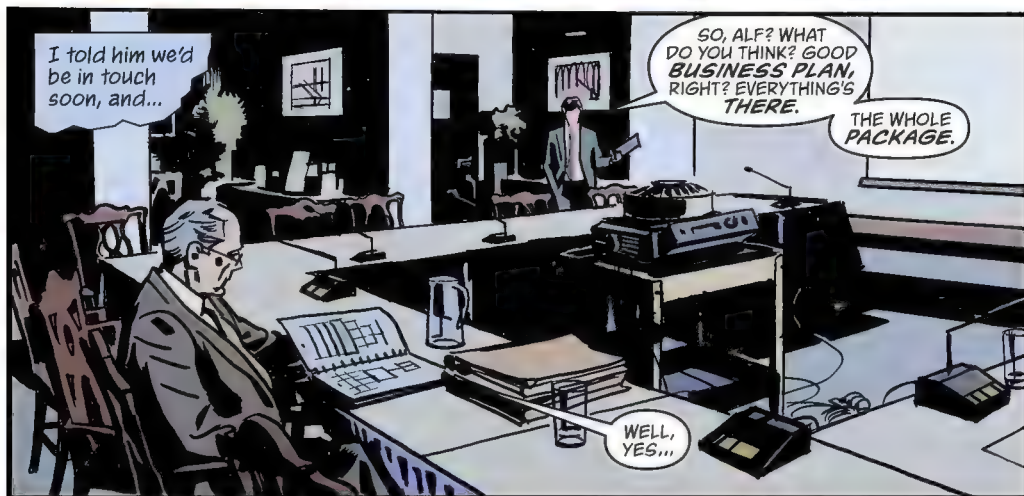
MODEMS WILL BE
HUGELY IMPORTANT, AS
THE COMPUTER INDUSTRY GROWS.
WE CAN MAKE **BETTER** MODEMS.
FASTER, MORE SECURE,
STURDIER.

WE HAVE
BREAKTHROUGH
DESIGNS, AS YOU'VE SEEN.
WE JUST NEED THE
BACKING.

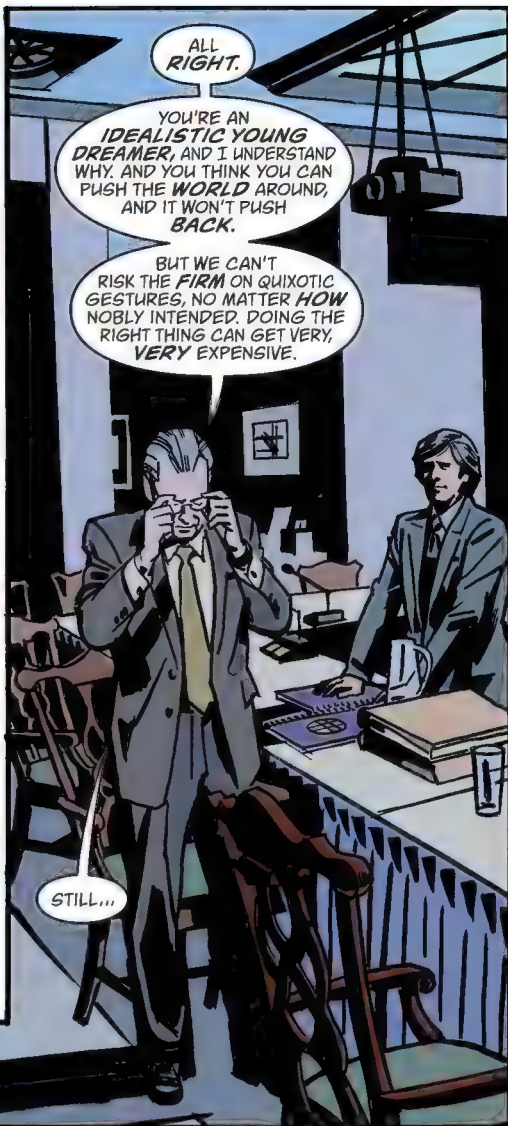
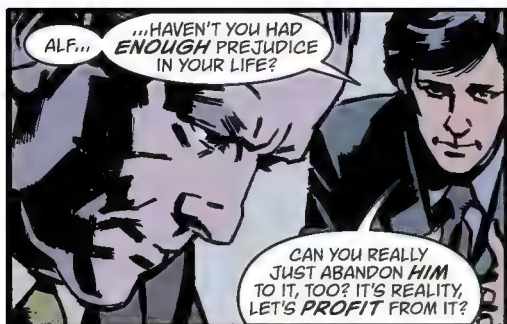
THE
FULL DETAILS ARE
IN THE **PRESENTATION**
PACKS, AND MY STAFF AND I
WILL BE HAPPY TO ANSWER
ANY QUESTIONS YOU
HAVE.



I HOPE
YOU'LL **CONSIDER**
OUR PROPOSAL. I THINK
WE'D BE A **GOOD**
FIT.







WE'LL BE CAREFUL. WE WON'T **OVEREXPOSE** OURSELVES.

AND WE'RE DOING WELL. WE CAN **AFFORD** A FEW GAMBLES. THIS'LL BE **GOOD**, ALF, YOU'LL SEE.

I had a feeling. I just knew it was going to work.





*Maybe it would work out.
Something had changed
about Bruce.*

*He seemed calmer, more
confident. Happier.*



*He brought a stronger
sense of purpose, of
commitment, to the
office.*

*Energizing the staff,
like he was head
coach, cheerleader
and team player.*



*And at the annual
Jimmy Fund gala...*

*--TO MEET YOU,
MR. YASTRZEMSKI. THIS IS
MY DATE, VICTORIA--*

*--MY COLLEAGUE
DAN KONIGSBERG AND HIS
WIFE--AND THE HEART AND
SOUL OF WAINWRIGHT
INVESTMENTS--*



*--MY UNCLE, ALTON
JEPSON.*



*He shot me such a "What,
no date?" look. I almost
burst out laughing.*

*Which, wouldn't have been
good for our relationship with
the Boston Red Sox.*

He knows, and doesn't care. So he thinks that's all there should be to it.

I should go ahead and tell the world.

A PLEASURE, SIR.

BRUCE, BRUCE, BRUCE...

THE WORLD...THE WORLD DOESN'T BECOME WHAT WE WANT, JUST BECAUSE WE WANT IT TO. YOU'LL LEARN...

HA! LET'S HOPE SOMEONE DOES...!

Things were going well. We were making money, getting involved in more good causes.

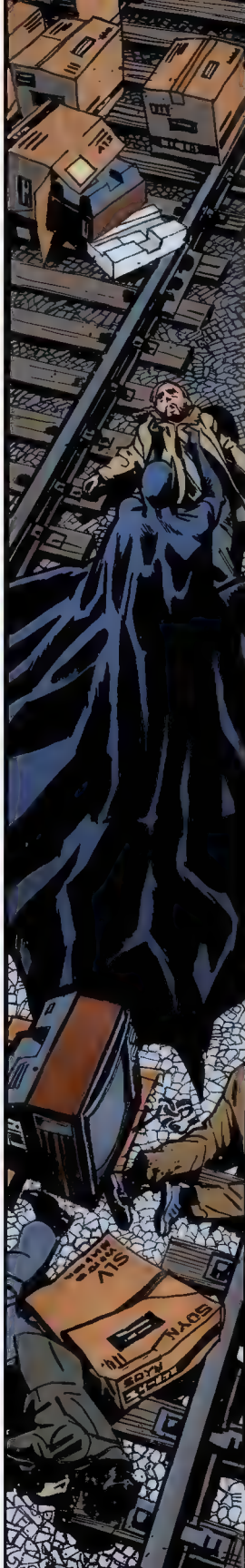
The Wainwright Foundation began sponsoring four more orphans who'd lost their families to crime.

But our first Robin—

The guidance counselors at Cornerstone said she was still having a rough time. And her psychologists...

...they said she was isolated, withdrawn. That she couldn't get past her parents' deaths.

I wanted to help, but—



I wanted to
find them—

The men who killed
her parents. The
men who shattered
her world—

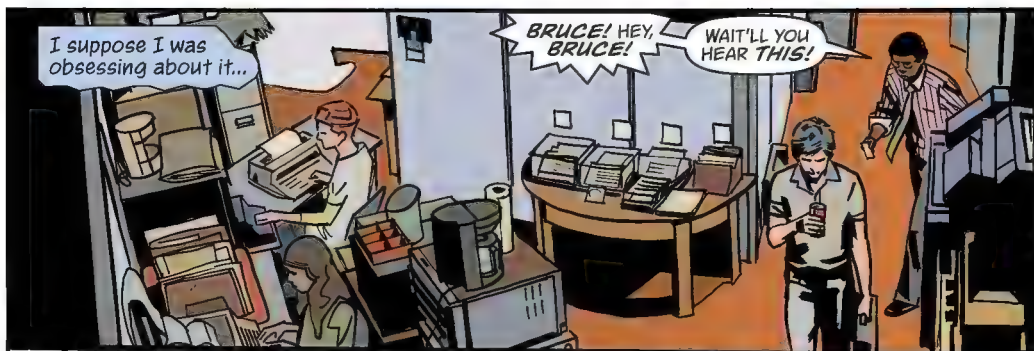


I wanted to
find them.
Bring them
to justice.

But—



I didn't
know where
to start.



I suppose I was
obsessing about it...

BRUCE! HEY,
BRUCE!

WAIT'LL YOU
HEAR THIS!



CARL BENARES,
THE HEAD OF BYTELINK--
THE MAIN COMPETITOR TO
YOUR MARTIN DATA-
FLOW GUY--

--HE'S BEEN ARRESTED!
CHARGED WITH **DRUG**
TRAFFICKING! **DRUG**
TRAFFICKING!

HM?

OH, GOOD,
GOOD...



HUH?

UH, JEPSON
CALLED A **MEETING**
ABOUT IT? WANTED YOU
THERE?



...OPEN AND SHUT
CASE, THEY SAY. HE WAS
USING TECH SHIPMENTS FROM
CHINA TO HIDE **HEROIN**
DELIVERIES.

THIS IS **HUGE** FOR US.
COMPUTER COMPANIES
ARE **SCRAMBLING** TO
GET SHUT OF HIM, FIND
NEW SUPPLIERS, AND
WE'RE IN AN **IDEAL**
POSITION TO--

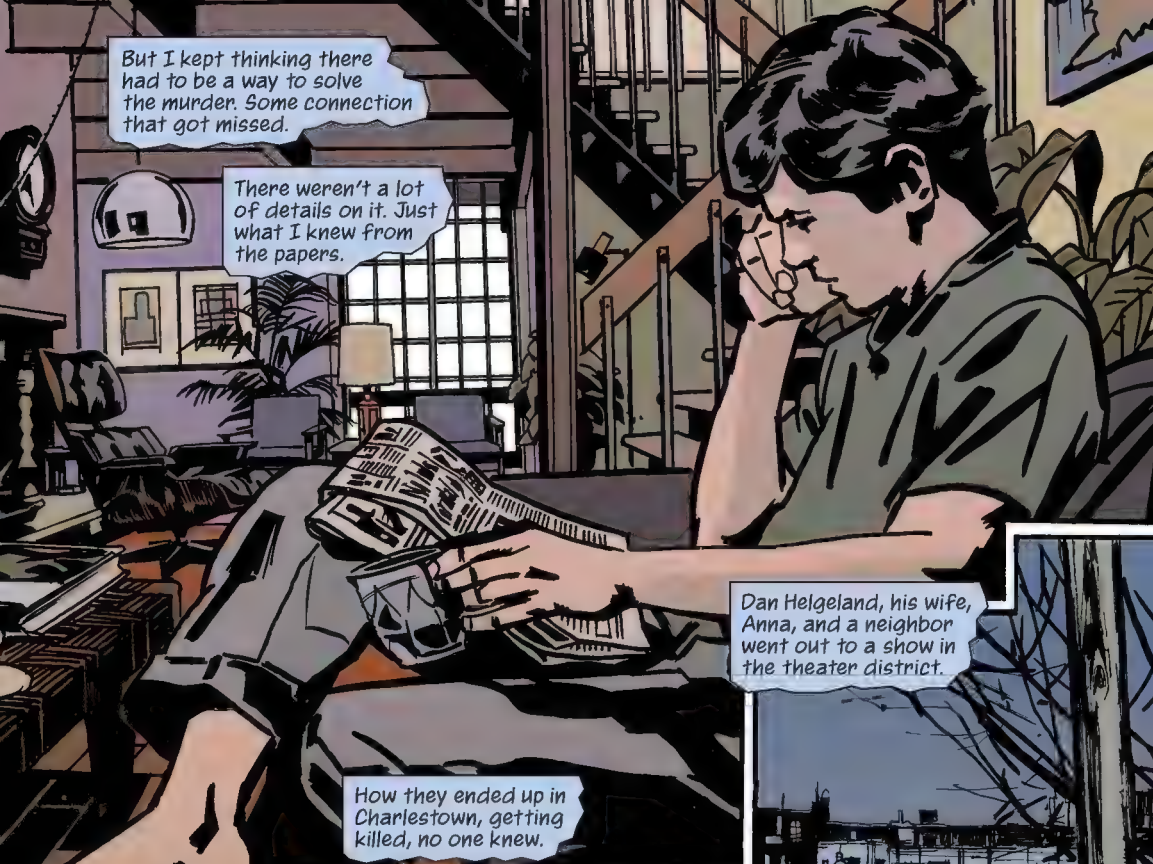


BRUCE?
ARE YOU
WITH US,
HERE?

HM?
YEAH, OF
COURSE.

LET'S KEEP AN
EYE ON IT. IT'S GREAT
NEWS, JUST GREAT. BUT
I'VE GOT A **THING**
RIGHT NOW--

I should have paid
more attention. I
really should have.



But I kept thinking there had to be a way to solve the murder. Some connection that got missed.

There weren't a lot of details on it. Just what I knew from the papers.

Dan Helgeland, his wife, Anna, and a neighbor went out to a show in the theater district.

How they ended up in Charlestown, getting killed, no one knew.

Did they get lost? Were they buying drugs, and things went wrong? Were they targeted for some reason?

No one knew.

I wanted a look at the police report, but I hadn't figured out the B.P.D. filing system.

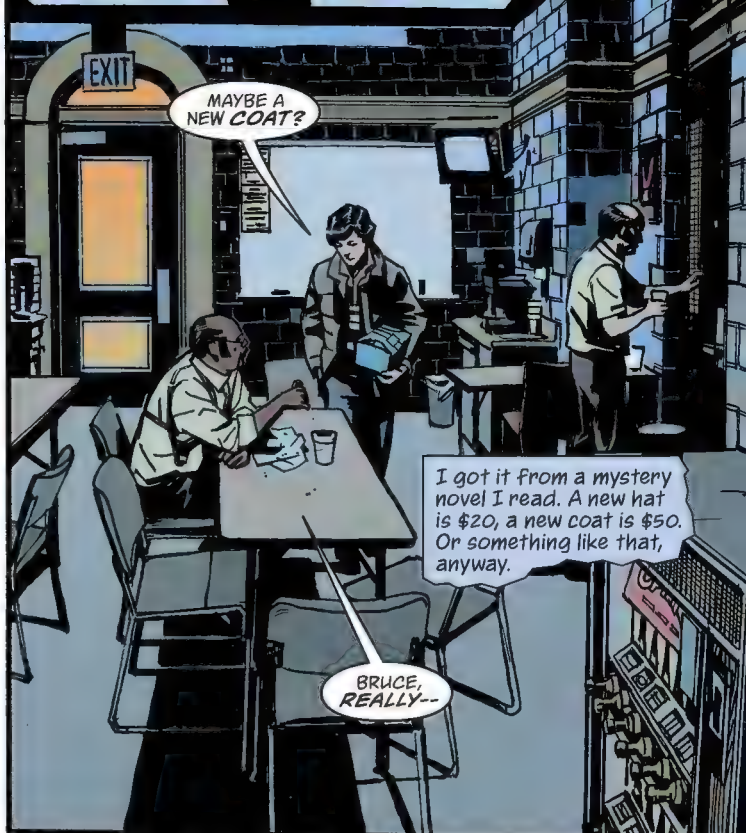
Active cases, we could always sneak off someone's desk. But this one was open, unsolved. I didn't know where to find it.

I needed some help.

DETECTIVE GORDON!
GREAT TO SEE YOU AGAIN!

UH-HUH.

WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU, BRUCE?



HOW
ABOUT
A NEW
CAR?

There wasn't much
more than I already
knew.

They had no reason to be in
Charlestown. It wasn't on
their way home, and they
were too familiar with the
area to get lost.

PP-RRR-RR

CAN'T GET THE
ENGINE STARTED.
I'D BETTER GET OUT,
CHECK THE--

EH? GOOD
LORD, MAN!
DON'T--

It wasn't on the way to anywhere
else they might have been going.

But somehow—
somehow—

BLAM!
BLAM!
BLAM!

The police conducted dozens of interviews.

Dan Helgeland was an accountant, so they looked hard at his clients, looking for organized-crime connections.

They looked at the neighbors.

They didn't find anything. In the end, they decided it was just wrong-place wrong-time. And they had other cases to work.

They had no traction—

SO, SOLVE THE CASE FOR US, KID?

IT LOOKS LIKE THE B.P.D. DID ALL THEY *COULD*. THANKS FOR LETTING ME SEE IT. I JUST--I WISH THERE WERE *ANSWERS*. JUSTICE FOR THEIR DAUGHTER.

I TELL YOU, WHAT THIS CASE NEEDS? IT NEEDS *BATMAN*.

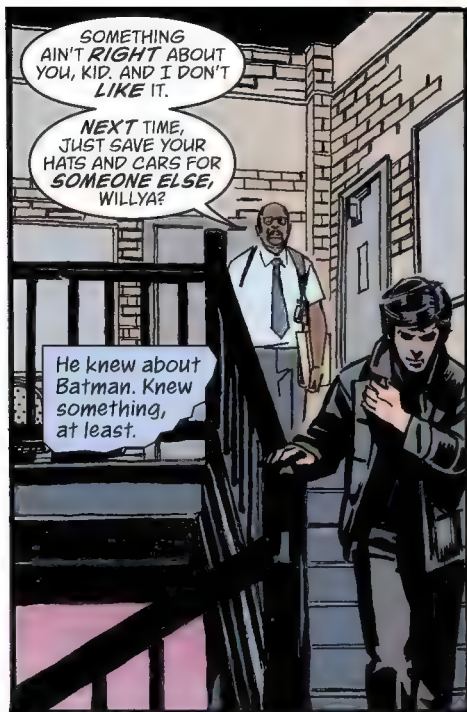
HUH?!

YOU *PLAYIN'* WITH ME, KID? YOU *KNOW* SOMETHING ABOUT SOMETHING? 'CAUSE IF YOU DO--

WHOA, WHOA--

I JUST--I LIKE *COMICS*, DETECTIVE HOOVER, THAT'S ALL. REMEMBER?

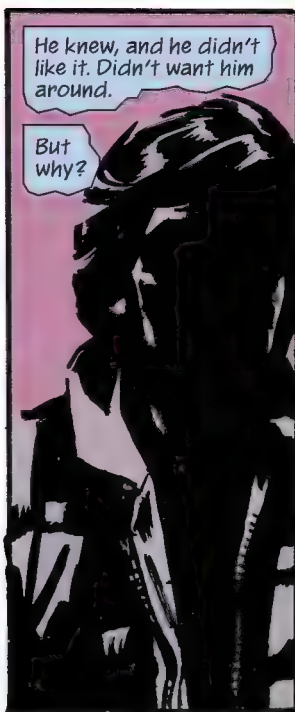
YEAH?



SOMETHING
AIN'T *RIGHT* ABOUT
YOU, KID. AND I DON'T
LIKE IT.

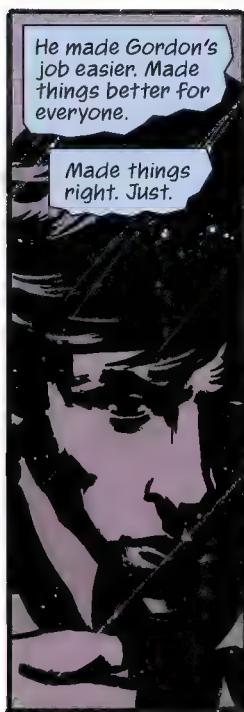
NEXT TIME,
JUST SAVE YOUR
HATS AND CARS FOR
SOMEONE ELSE,
WILLYA?

He knew about
Batman. Knew
something,
at least.



He knew, and he didn't
like it. Didn't want him
around.

But
why?



He made Gordon's
job easier. Made
things better for
everyone.

Made things
right. Just.



The cops had only so much time.
And too much to do. When they
couldn't come up with any
connections, they had to
stop looking.

Batman and I,
we didn't.



The police thought it was
bad luck. Or they'd gone
to Charlestown to score
some drugs or something,
and it went wrong.

We didn't believe that.
So we looked harder.

And we found something.

**THE
HELGELANDS.**

HNH?

**TALK
TO ME.
TELL
ME...**

WHO?
WHAT DO
YOU--?

We didn't find anything about Robin's parents that explained why they'd been killed.

Or their neighbor, a friend of Robin's mother who volunteered at the local library.

But it got me thinking. Neighbors.

SEAN,
GRAB ME
ANOTHER
BEER,
WILLYA?

What about
the others--?

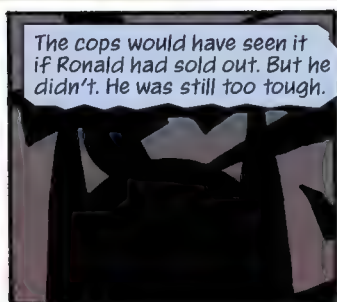
YEAH, YEAH,
YOU CAN GET IT
YOURSELF,
YOU LAZY--

WHAT
IN--?

MOTHER
F--

What about the
other neighbors?





I had to admire Ronald,
at least to some degree.

I'd admire him more if
he'd gone to the cops,
but then he'd probably
be dead. You can only
ask people to be so
brave.

NO--
PLEASE--

STAY--STAY
BACK--

For the rest
of it—

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

—they
needed
a little
help.

Hanrahan's men
didn't hold out
long.

I got
what I
needed.

IT
AIN'T...

...AIN'T
NO FAIR...

NO.

NOT
YET.





*He seemed happier, for a while.
More focused, more involved with
Wainwright business.*

*And with ByteLink's president
in jail, we moved aggressively on
DataFlow's behalf. It took a
year, but when it came time
for their IPO--*

--PLEASED AND PROUD
TO SAY THAT WE FINISHED UP WITH
175 PERCENT OF EXPECTED
INVESTMENT!

SO DRINK
UP, FOLKS--DATAFLOW
CAN AFFORD IT!

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA

CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP

BRUCE...

I WANT TO THANK
YOU AGAIN. YOU BACKED
US WHEN NO ONE ELSE
WOULD EVEN--

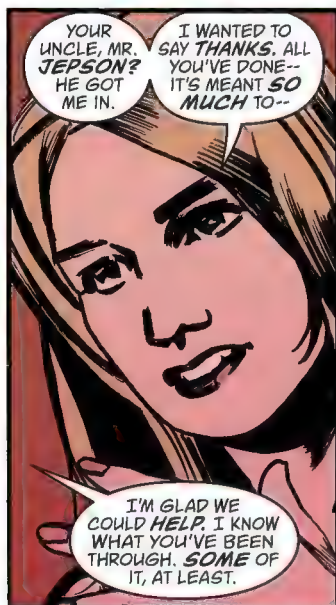
YOU MAKE A
GOOD PRODUCT,
MARTIN. AND YOU HAD
A SOLID BUSINESS
PLAN.

WELL, I KNEW THAT!
I JUST KNOW WHAT KIND
OF RISK YOU TOOK,
TOO.

YOU *DESERVE*
YOUR SUCCESS, MARTIN.
EVERY BIT OF IT. AND WE'RE
HAPPY TO RIDE THE WAVE
WITH YOU, PICK UP SOME
FOR OURSELVES.

THIS IS YOUR
DAY. ENJOY IT.

MR. WAIN-
WRIGHT...?





I hadn't thought about what she'd do after Cornerstone. But if she wanted to help, too—it was a nice idea. Maybe it'd work.

Who says you can't make the world fair? Who says you can't make it better?



HEY, KID. REMEMBER THIS?

HUH?

DETECTIVE HOOVER?



INTERESTING THING. I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT MAYBE WANT TO KNOW.

THE EVIDENCE AGAINST CARL BENARES, THAT PUT HIM AWAY? IT WAS PHONY.

WH-WHAT?!



OH, IT WAS REAL STUFF, BUT IT WAS PLANTED. SWIPED OUT OF A POLICE EVIDENCE LOCKUP IN NASHUA.

TOOK ALL THIS WHILE TO STRAIGHTEN OUT.

YOU WOULDN'T BE BUYING ANY CARS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE, KID, WOULD YOU?



WHAT?



IT'S JUST IT WAS SO CONVENIENT FOR YOU-- FOR YOUR BIG COMPUTER SHINDIG HERE. HIM GETTIN' TAKEN OFF THE BOARD, IT SET YOU UP REAL NICE.



I looked—
through his
memories.
Really looked—

There was so
much—so
much more—

The Benares
drugs—Nashua—

Planting
them—

The ship—that gave Pennysworth
Manufacturing its chance—

And others—dozens
more—so many things—
incidents—strokes of
luck—

Even the
National
Enquirer—

It wasn't DC's
lawyers, wasn't
them at all—

WAS--WAS
ANY OF IT
REAL--?

WAS THAT
EVEN--WAS HE THE
MAN WHO ORDERED
HER PARENTS
KILLED?



YES...

YES!



BUT ALL
OF IT--I THOUGHT
IT WAS **LUCK**--
SKILL--

Benares--they'd free him, but
he'd never get that time back,
never get his company back--



YOU...SAFE.
KEEP YOU
SAFE.

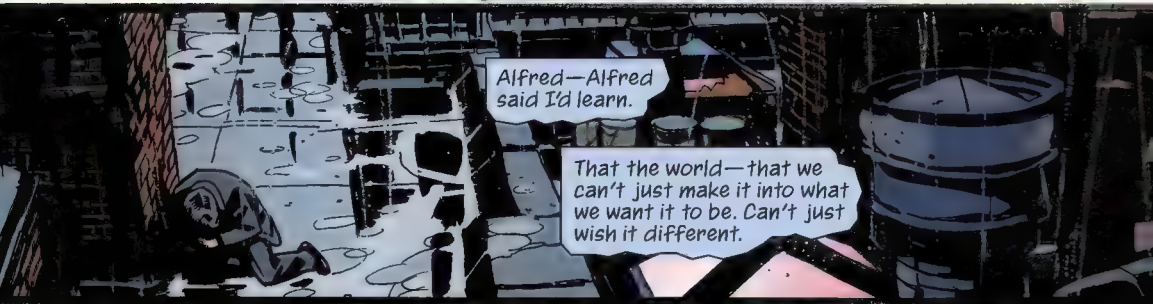
MAKE IT
RIGHT. MAKE
IT **FAIR**.

GO...GO
AWAY...



GO--

AAAAARRH!!



Alfred—Alfred
said I'd learn.

That the world—that we
can't just make it into what
we want it to be. Can't just
wish it different.



WHAT--

WHAT--

He said I'd
learn...







BOOK THREE: **CRUSADER**

DC

THRILLING MYSTERY TALES

*I'd like to say Bruce
was a creature of moods.*

*But that's not right.
Moods change more
swiftly than that.*

*Bruce was more a creature
of tides. And this latest
tide was a dark one, and
lasted far too long.*



DETECTIVE
COMICS

Detective COMICS



The SECRET
SHOCKER
of
BATMAN'S
DOPPELGÄNGER
and his
MURDEROUS
WAR ON
CRIME!



The MASTER
CRIME FILE
OF
Jason Bard



"WHO
ASKS to
KNOW?"



Y-YOU'RE NOT
BRUCE WAYNE!

BUT--
**WHO ARE
YOU?!**

*And I didn't know
what to do about it.*

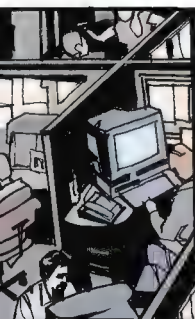
He hadn't been spending much time in the office.

Not that business had suffered. He wasn't making the kind of intuitive leaps he used to, these past few years—

—but Wainwright Investments had been showing steady, dependable growth. Still, something was bothering him.



Some young woman? His ongoing Batman mania? There had been that dark, gloomy movie—



MARGARET?

COULD YOU
CONNECT ME TO MISS
HELGELAND?

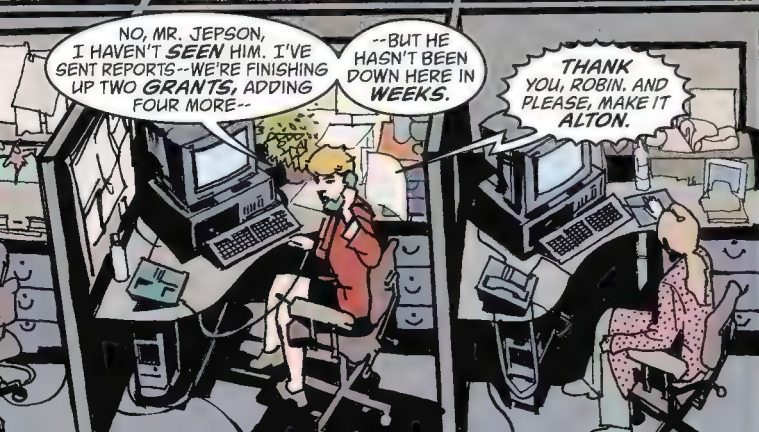


Perhaps something to do with his charity program, helping victims of crime like himself?

NO, MR. JEPSON,
I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM. I'VE
SENT REPORTS--WE'RE FINISHING
UP TWO GRANTS, ADDING
FOUR MORE--

--BUT HE
HASN'T BEEN
DOWN HERE IN
WEEKS.

THANK
YOU, ROBIN. AND
PLEASE, MAKE IT
ALTON.



OF
COURSE,
SIR.

HM.





HUH.

I didn't know Bruce Wainwright like Mr. Jepson did. But if there was a problem—I owed him so much.

Where could he be?
What was he doing?

H A R A R R R R



UHH!!



NOT
YOUR
CITY!

NOT YOUR
SHADOWS!



Cockroaches. But
there's a world of
cockroaches.

Step on one
or two—

—it doesn't
amount to
anything.



SAFE
NOW.

UH--
UH--



She'd tell stories —
there were stories of
him spreading now.

But not many, and
they weren't much
believed, thanks to
our lower profile
of late.



FREEZE!





I like to stay in the open now, let them see me.

See that I don't contact him, don't give orders. That I'm not anywhere near wherever he turns up.



Not that it matters. I see it all through his eyes, hear it all, too.

Every snarl and crunch.



They haven't given up, though. Still following me.



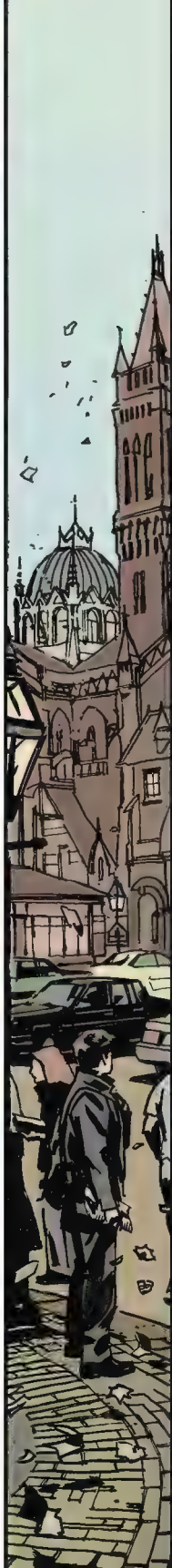
I just wish—
I wish—



All of this I can
do. All of it.

Even if I don't
know how or
why—

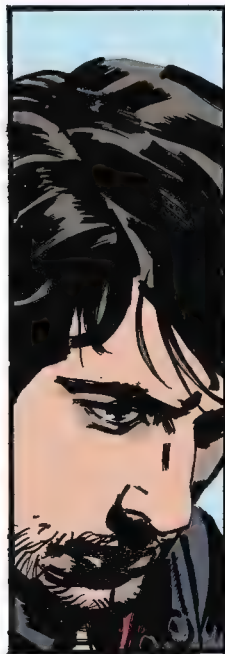
I can manifest
Batman—
Batman!—
like a ghost!




Like a guardian
angel. Like—

And I don't know
what to do. How
to make it work.
I've tried for
years now.

I wanted to get it
right. To be sure.
So I chose
carefully—





Dickie McKenna had taken over most of the local gangs when the Hanrahan mob went down.

He ran things from his place in Charlestown.

We took him out. His muscle, his closest lieutenants—left enough of his records for the cops that it'd blow his operations sky high.

A big win, you'd think.

But did it make the city safer? Did it fix anything?

All that happened was that someone else stepped up—

Drozski, a Russian who'd come to the promised land—

—and he and his were even worse than McKenna. Crime went up.

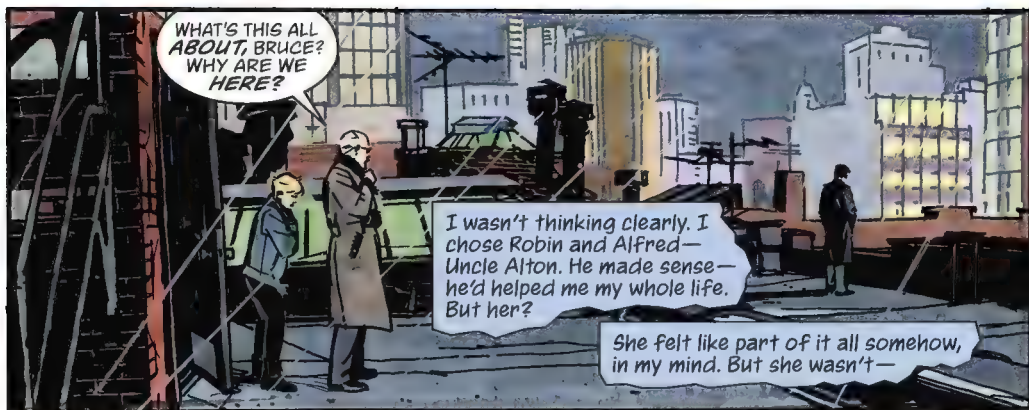


—and Dickie McKenna goes right back to running things from prison, using his lawyer and what's left of his gang to consolidate power.

We could stop that, but what happens then? Who takes over, and how bad are they?



It wasn't clean. Wasn't easy. Not like in the comics.





BRUCE?
ARE YOU ALL
RIGHT?

NO! NO, I'LL
SHOW YOU!
I WILL!



COME
ON!

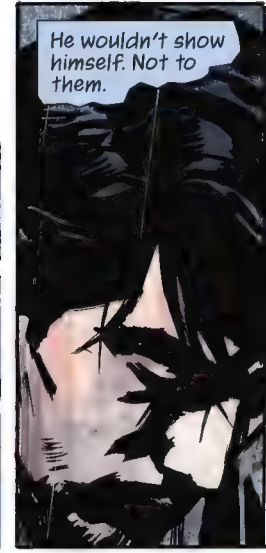
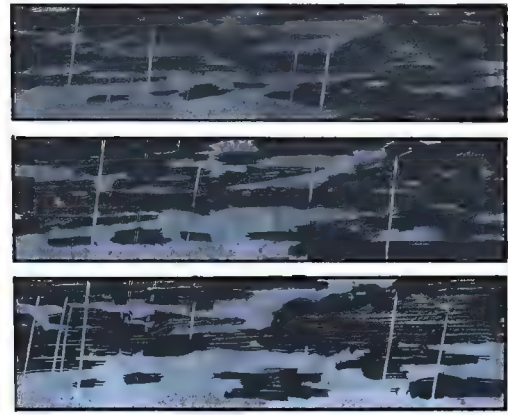


IT'S OKAY!
THEY'RE FRIENDS!
FRIENDS! COME
ON!

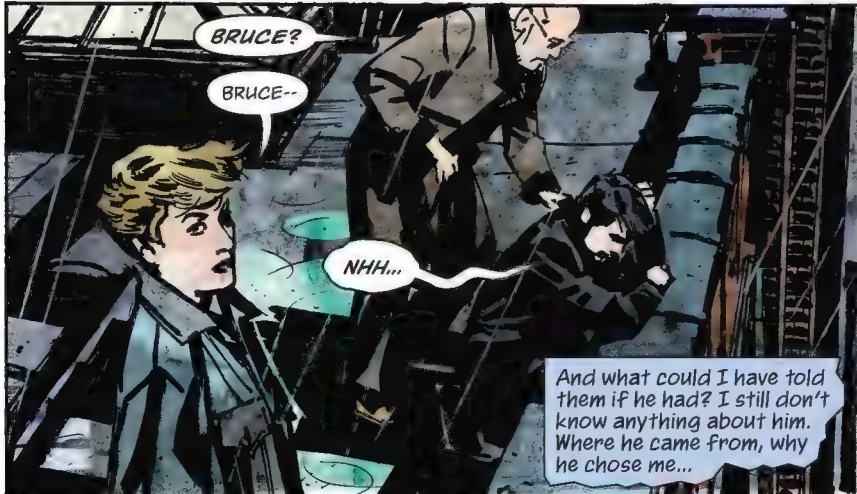


I ORDER
YOU! NOW!
RIGHT NOW,
DAMMIT--!

NOW!!



He wouldn't show
himself. Not to
them.

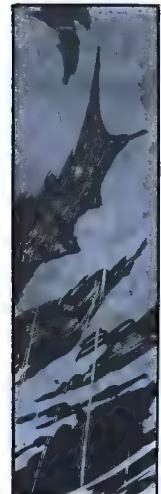


BRUCE?

BRUCE--

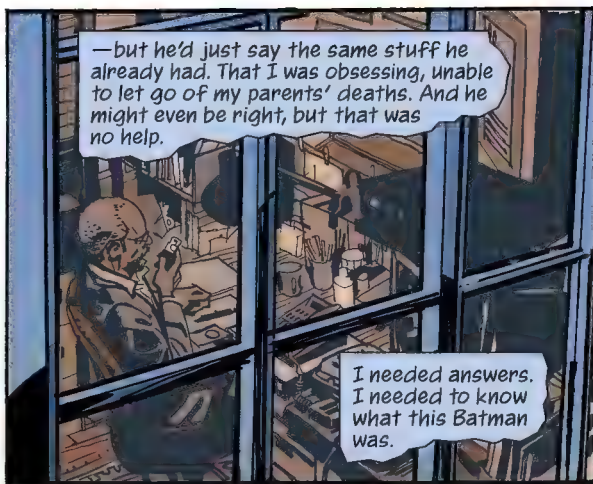
NHH...

And what could I have told
them if he had? I still don't
know anything about him.
Where he came from, why
he chose me...





I thought about talking to the psychiatrist again—



—but he'd just say the same stuff he already had. That I was obsessing, unable to let go of my parents' deaths. And he might even be right, but that was no help.

I needed answers. I needed to know what this Batman was.



He was supernatural. Maybe I needed a mystic answer?

We checked out a few fortune-tellers.



But half of them were nothing more than entertainers—

"YOU WILL COME INTO MONEY."
"I SEE HEALTHY, HAPPY DAYS, TRAVEL AND CHILDREN."

AND BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH.

I NEED A DRINK.



DO YOU FEEL IT? THE VIBRATIONS?
THE SPIRITS ARE READY TO SPEAK!

VM MMMMM

—and the other half were outright frauds.

I didn't know what to do. I didn't know what to do.

But I had to do something.

Gordon had been suspicious. But he'd agreed to listen.

THE PASTA'S GREAT. BUT YOU DIDN'T INVITE ME HERE FOR PASTA.

YEAH, NO.

I WANTED TO TALK. ABOUT BATMAN.

WHO? THE GUY IN THE MOVIES?

YOU KNOW WHO I MEAN.

YOU'VE BEEN FOLLOWING ME, INVESTIGATING ME, MAYBE TAPPING MY PHONES, TOO. AND YOU'RE NOT FINDING ANYTHING.


BECAUSE THERE'S NOTHING TO FIND.

JUST BECAUSE I'M NOT YOUR GUY DOESN'T MEAN THERE'S NO GUY.

WE BOTH KNOW. THERE'S SOMEONE OUT THERE. AND I THINK YOU KNOW--HE WANTS TO HELP.

HE MADE SOME MISTAKES BEFORE, BUT--





Because I was
still lost—

—still without a
single clue what
to do—

I didn't have
anyone to
talk to.

I DON'T--
DON'T--

EVERYWHERE
I **TURN**, IT'S LIKE I'M
CAUGHT IN THE MUD, LIKE MY
TIRES ARE SPINNING, AND
I JUST KEEP SINKING
DEEPER.

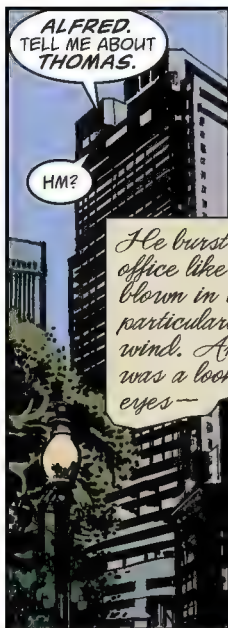
NOTHING
WORKS. NOTHING
MAKES ANYTHING
BETTER.

I WANT TO--
I WANT TO MAKE THE
WORLD **BETTER**. DO GOOD.
IT SEEMS LIKE--LIKE I'VE BEEN
GIVEN THE **CHANCE** TO,
THE POWER TO.

AND IF I
CAN, SHOULDN'T
I?

I MEAN,
SHOULDN'T
I?





ALFRED.
TELL ME ABOUT
THOMAS.

HM?

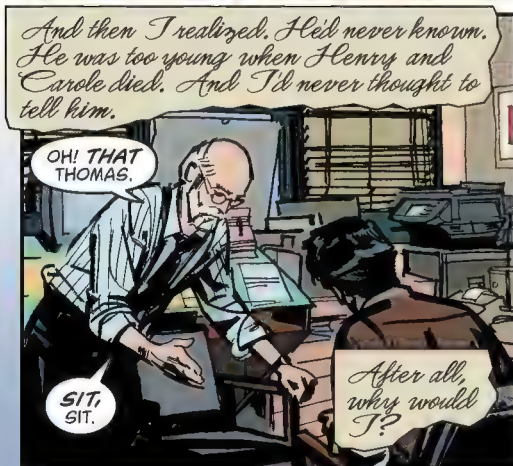
*He burst into my
office like he'd been
blown in by a
particularly violent
wind. And there
was a look in his
eyes—*



TELL ME!
I SAW THE
GRAVE.

BRUCE, WHAT ON
EARTH--?

APRIL 14,
1960. THAT'S MY
BIRTHDAY. WHO'S
THOMAS,
ALFRED?

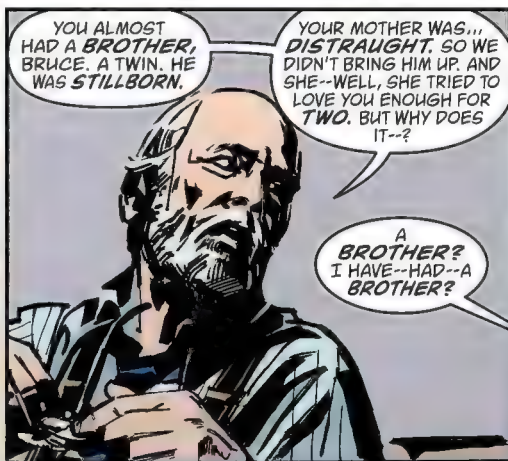


*And then I realized. He'd never known.
He was too young when Henry and
Carole died. And I'd never thought to
tell him.*

OH! THAT
THOMAS.

SIT,
SIT.

*After all,
why would
I?*



YOU ALMOST
HAD A BROTHER,
BRUCE. A TWIN. HE
WAS STILLBORN.

YOUR MOTHER WAS...
DISTRAUGHT. SO WE
DIDN'T BRING HIM UP. AND
SHE--WELL, SHE TRIED TO
LOVE YOU ENOUGH FOR
TWO. BUT WHY DOES
IT--?

A
BROTHER?
I HAVE--HAD--A
BROTHER?



A BROTHER...

*And I wondered, where
was this going to send him?
He'd been so glum--would
this be good?*

*Or just something
new to obsess about?*



My brother. My stillborn twin brother might be Batman. It sounds crazy. Demented.

But it was a place to start.



Where do you go to look into something like that? It turns out, college. To Neponset Valley Community College, at least to start.

And the office of Dr. Katerina Nibisi—



...FOR YOUR TIME, I'M... WORKING ON A *BOOK*, A NOVEL. AND I'M STUCK ON SOMETHING THAT'S KIND OF IN YOUR AREA.

—professor of parapsychology and occult studies.

OH?

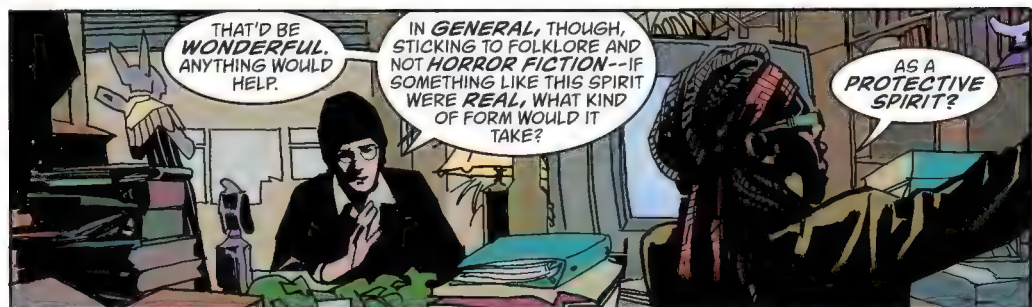
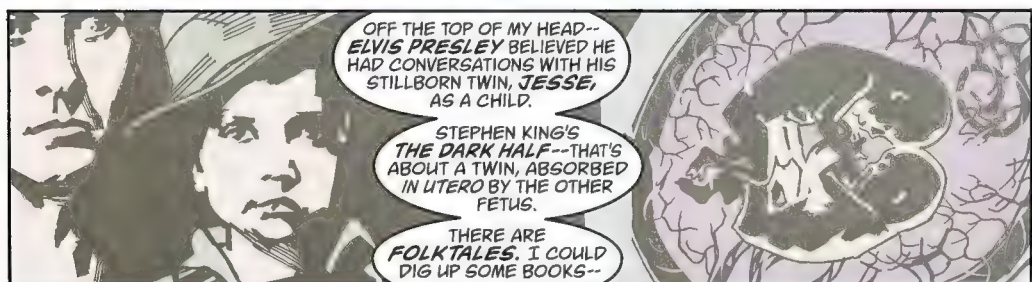
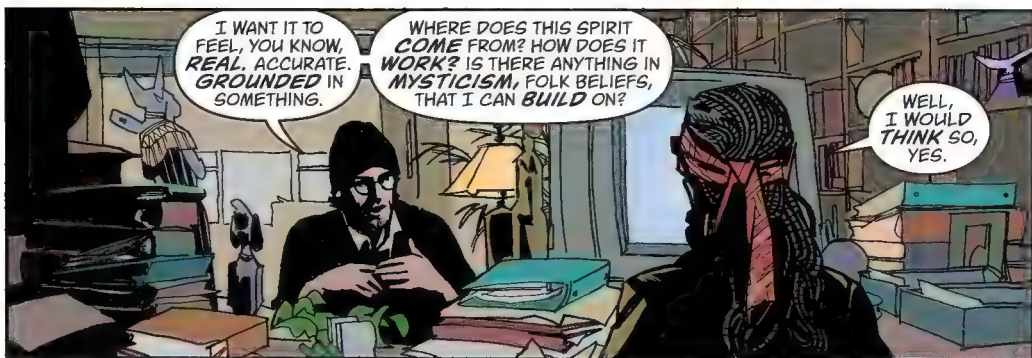


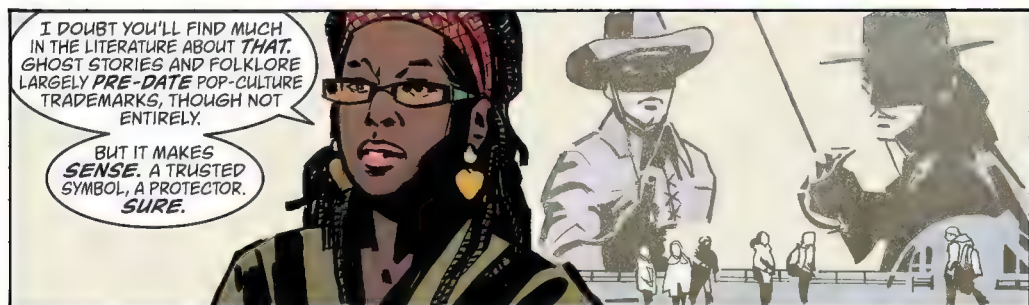
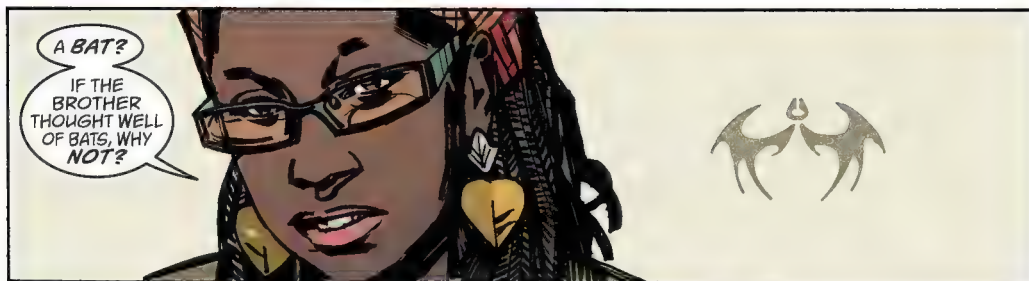
I'VE GOT THIS CHARACTER. HE HAD A *TWIN BROTHER*, DIED AT BIRTH. BUT THERE'S SOMETHING--THEY'RE STILL *CONNECTED* SOMEHOW.

THE BROTHER'S SPIRIT--OR *WHATEVER*--IS WATCHING OVER HIM, PROTECTING HIM, *HELPING* HIM.



AND YOU WANT TO *KNOW*...







A brother. He could be my brother. It still sounded crazy.

But it had been crazy all along. This wasn't any crazier. And it felt...right. It felt true.



I'd had the car wait a few blocks away, just to keep the cops off Dr. Nibisi, if they were still following me.

But—

HEY, KID.



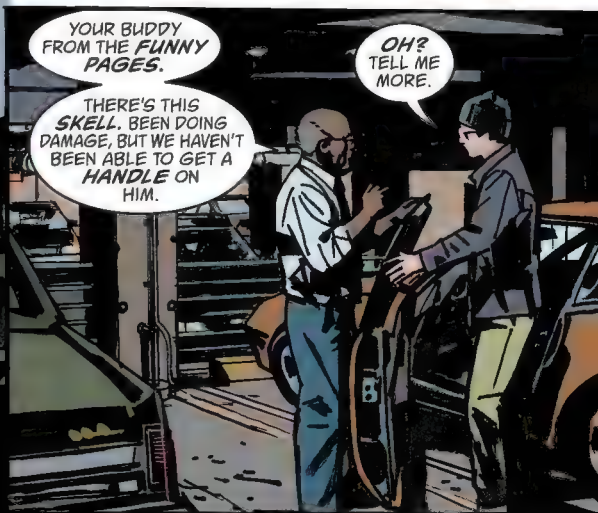
GORDON?

YOU GET AROUND, KID, YOU REALLY DO. NEPONSET VALLEY C.C.? AND YOU A HARVARD MAN.



BUT OKAY, KID. LET'S TRY THIS YOUR WAY, A LITTLE.

HUH?



YOUR BUDDY FROM THE FUNNY PAGES.

OH? TELL ME MORE.

THERE'S THIS SKELL. BEEN DOING DAMAGE, BUT WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET A HANDLE ON HIM.



The skell's name was Ronnie O'Hearn. He was a wannabe loan shark.

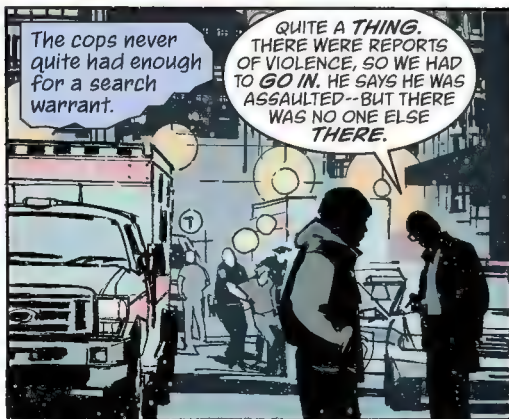


But in trying to make a name for himself, he didn't just break legs if you didn't pay. He cut throats.

HRRRRRRRR...



UHH!



The cops never quite had enough for a search warrant.

QUITE A **THING**. THERE WERE REPORTS OF VIOLENCE, SO WE HAD TO **GO IN**. HE SAYS HE WAS ASSAULTED--BUT THERE WAS NO ONE ELSE **THERE**.



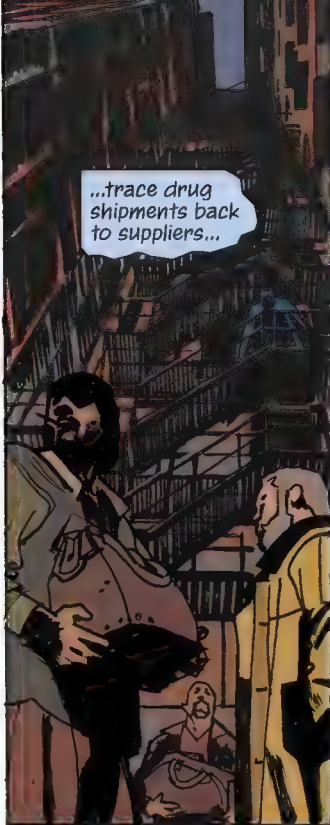
AND WE FOUND THE MOST **INCRIMINATING** LEDGERS...

REALLY? WELL, **THAT'S** NICE.



And that was the start.

After that, we got to trail a few guys...



...trace drug shipments back to suppliers...



...protect a key witness...

HLKK



I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU **DO** IT, KID. I THINK MAYBE I DON'T EVEN **WANT** TO KNOW.


MY MEN SAY THEY NEVER **SEE** YOU. YOU NEVER **CALL** THIS GUY, NEVER **MEET** WITH HIM...

HONESTLY, YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE ME IF I **TOLD** YOU.



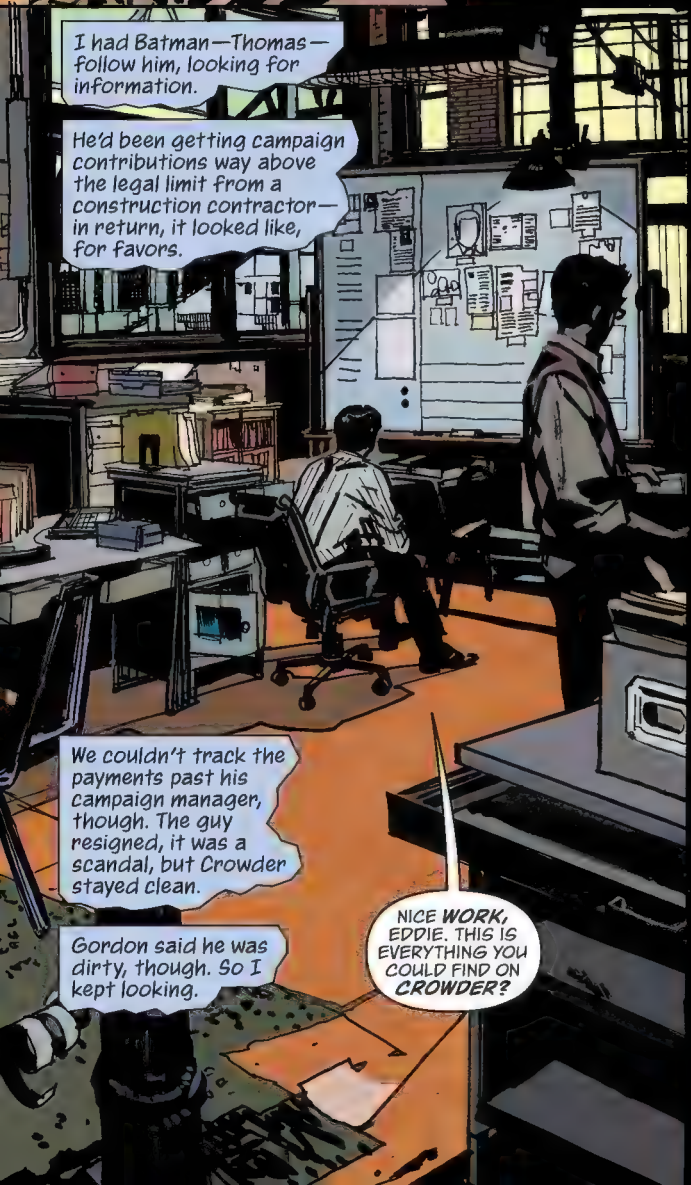
YEAH, **WHATEVER**. ENOUGH WITH THE **PRELIMINARIES**.

LET'S TALK ABOUT **JACK CROWDER**.



Jack Crowder, state senator. There'd been rumors around him for years, that he was on the take. But there are always rumors.

Gordon needed to know if they were true.



I had Batman—Thomas—follow him, looking for information.

He'd been getting campaign contributions way above the legal limit from a construction contractor—in return, it looked like, for favors.

We couldn't track the payments past his campaign manager, though. The guy resigned, it was a scandal, but Crowder stayed clean.

Gordon said he was dirty, though. So I kept looking.


NICE WORK, EDDIE. THIS IS EVERYTHING YOU COULD FIND ON CROWDER?

SO FAR.

UH, MR. WAINWRIGHT? WE'RE NOT DOING BUSINESS WITH ANYONE CONNECTED TO CROWDER. SO, UH--

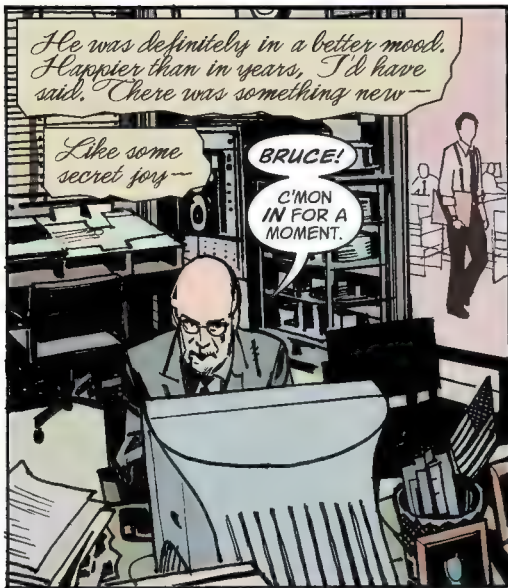
MAKE IT BRUCE.

AND WHY ALL THIS, IF IT'S NOT COMPANY BUSINESS?



CALL IT
A *HOBBY*. WE'RE
MAKING THE *WORLD*
BETTER, EDDIE.

MAKING
THE *WORLD*
BETTER.



*He was definitely in a better mood.
Happier than in years, I'd have
said. There was something new—*

*Like some
secret joy—*

BRUCE!


C'MON
IN FOR A
MOMENT.



HOW ARE
YOU *DOING*
THESE
DAYS?

**GOOD,
GOOD.**

THE **DONNINGTON
MERGER'S** WELL UNDER
WAY, AND I'M LOOKING AT A
COUPLE OF NEW--



I DON'T MEAN JUST
BUSINESS--ALTHOUGH
I DO HAVE TO SAY, YOU'RE
MORE FOCUSED, MORE
ENGAGED. IT'S QUITE
WELCOME.

BUT SOMETHING
ELSE HAS CHANGED.
RELAXED YOU.

**YEAH,
MAYBE.**



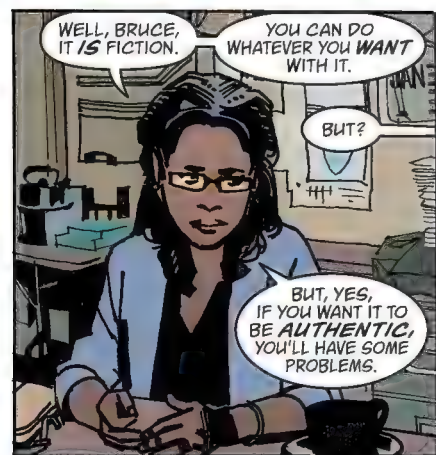
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
I'M **HAPPY** FOR YOU, BUT
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

YOU'D ASKED ABOUT
THOMAS.

IS **THAT**
WHAT IT'S
ABOUT?

THAT'S
PART OF IT,
SURE.

BUT
HOW--





IT'S NOT LIKELY TO **CHANGE**. OR GROW. THE FORM IT TOOK, IT'S PROBABLY **STUCK** THAT WAY.

AND EVEN IF IT **COULD** CHANGE ITS OUTER FORM, THE INNER IDEA, THE **DRIVE**, THE **NEED**--IT WOULD STAY THE **SAME**.

That's what she said. That he wouldn't change. Couldn't change.



But I'd already seen him change, in some ways. Seen him get more and more human. Seen him learn. At least, I think he learned.

There weren't any cops around.



THOMAS.

So I thought I'd ask.

He'd tried to make the world fair—fair for me—by manipulating things, harming innocent people to benefit me.



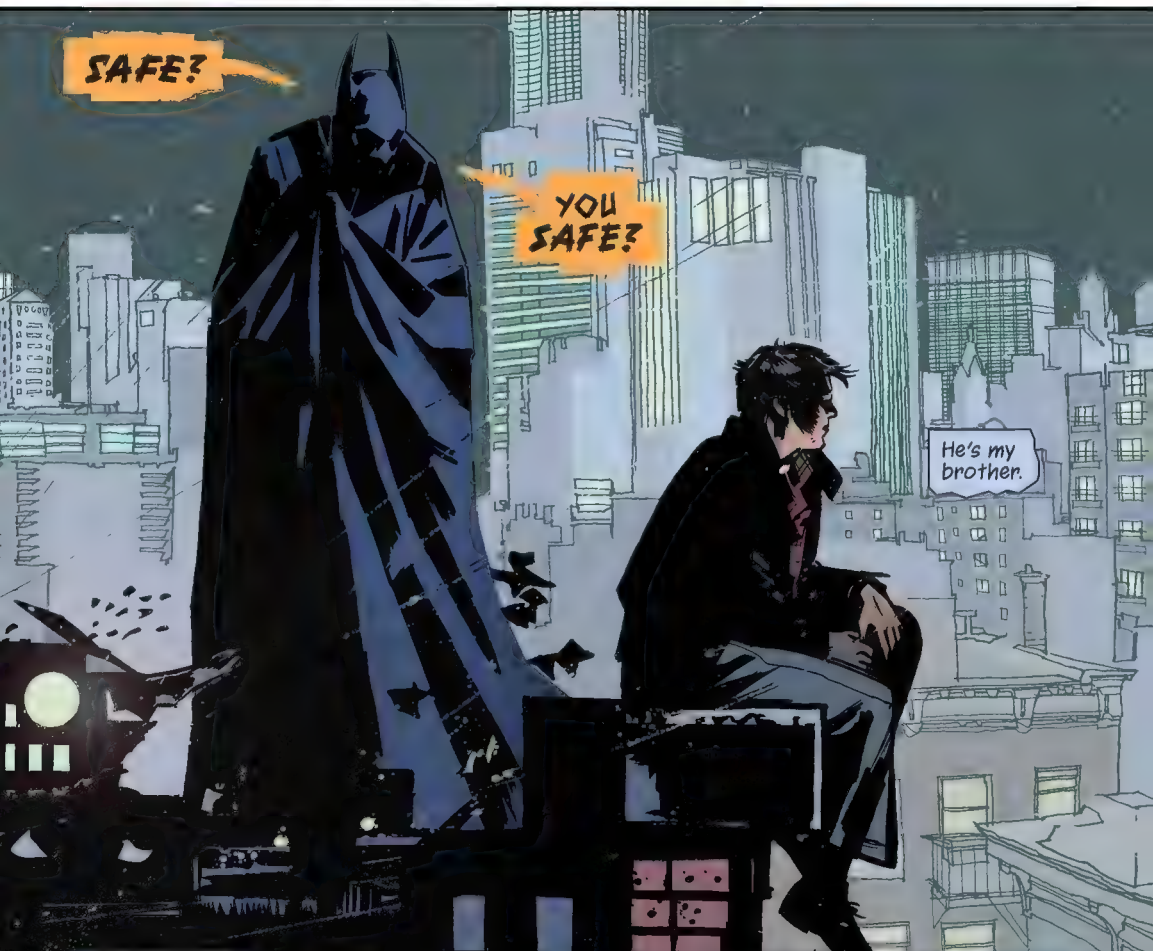
TOMMY!

But he learned, right? I told him not to, and he understands. That it doesn't help me. Doesn't help anyone.



He's changed. He's grown. He must have. This ghost lore—it's ultimately just legends. She doesn't really know.

Whether he's a ghost, a spirit, a psychic projection—



SAFE?

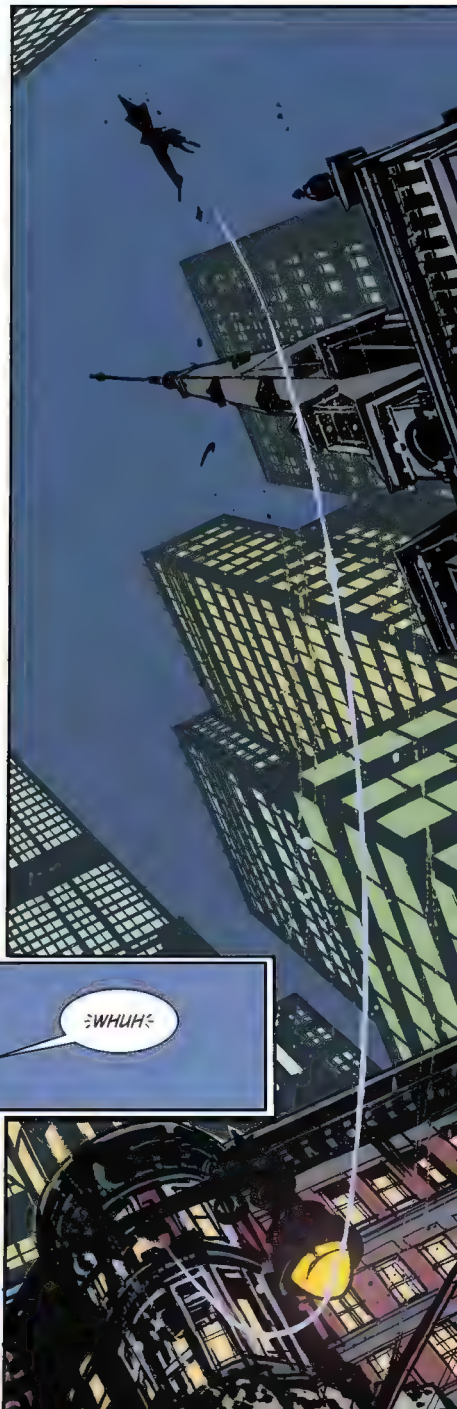
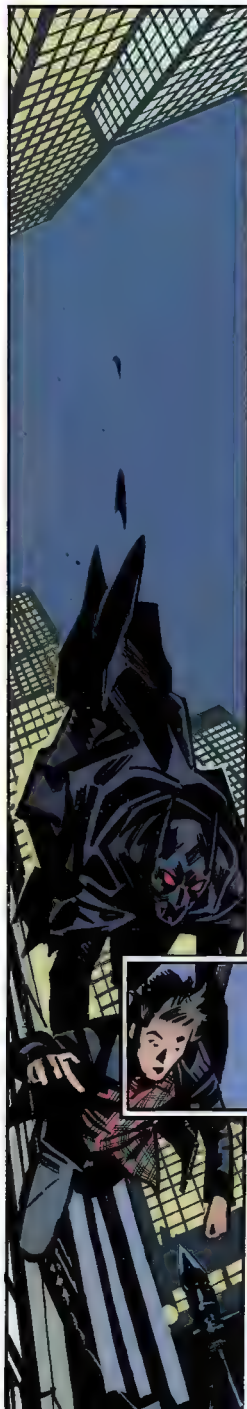
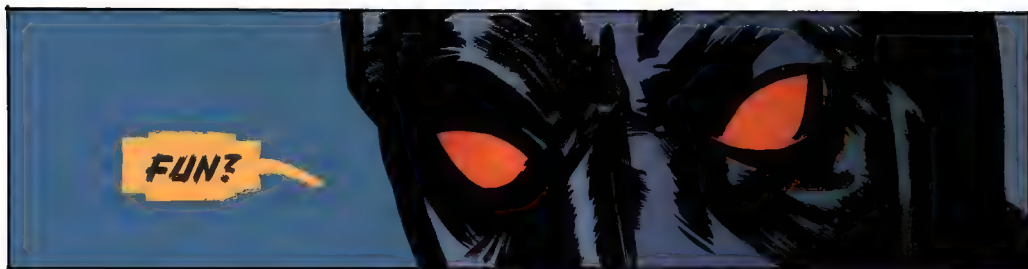
**YOU
SAFE?**

He's my brother.



YES, TOMMY. I'M **SAFE**. I JUST WONDERED—

AH, **FORGET** WHAT I WONDERED. WHY DON'T WE JUST HAVE SOME FUN?



WA-
HA-
HOOOOOOO!

I can't help it. It's
such a thrill, such
a blast. And I feel
it in him, too—

—a burst of joy,
of something—
brotherly—



BRUCE?

THEY TOLD
ME YOU WERE
GONE...?

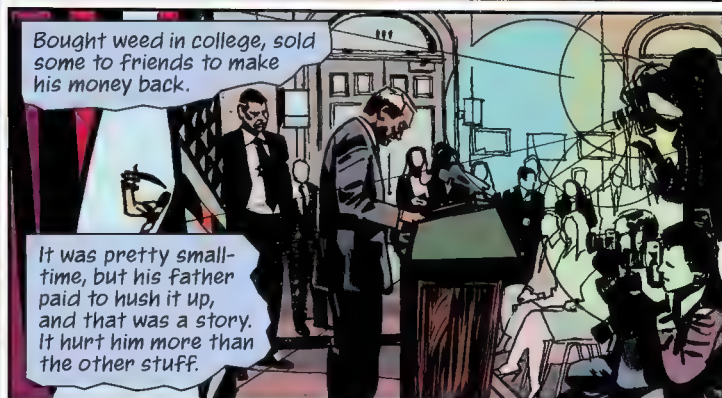
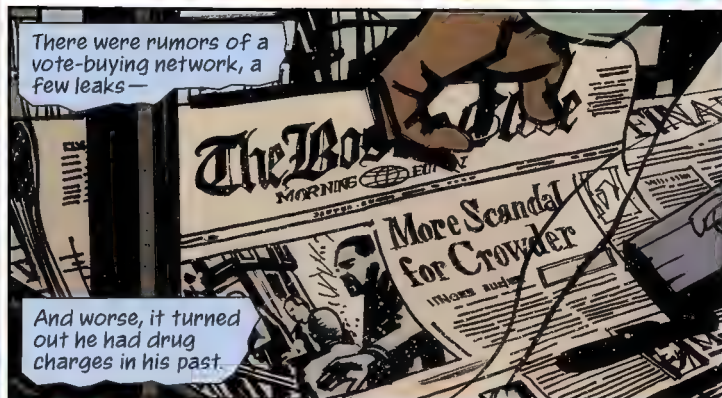
*He hasn't been to see his
therapist in months. Hasn't
felt the need, apparently.*

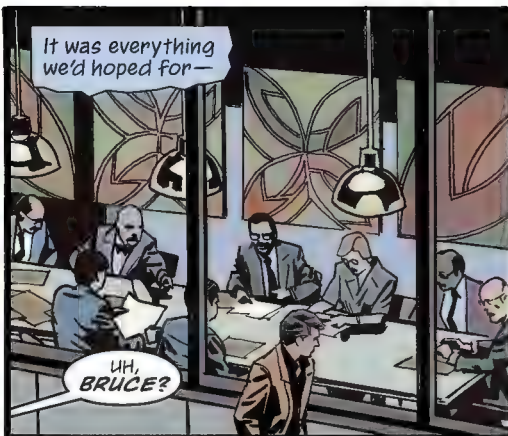
HMM.


*Could it be a girl? Perhaps
I was a meddling old fool,
but I hoped so. Whatever
it was—*

--HOOOOOO--

—I was glad of it.








A punk named Donnie Regan had been caught stealing a couple of Crowder yard signs. The cops thought it was just hooliganism—

—until they found about sixty more in his van.

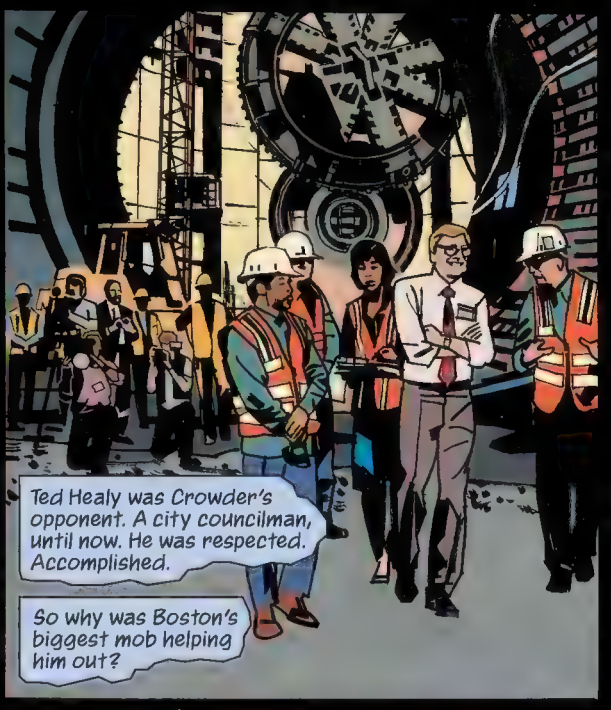
But Donnie Regan worked for the McKennas. And Jack Hanrahan before them.



And if they didn't like Crowder—


--JUST CAN'T GET THE GOODS ON CROWDER, BUT WE *KNOW* HE'S DIRTY.

IF WE COULD *SHOW* IT--GET TED HEALY IN THERE INSTEAD--OH, YOU'D SEE CHANGE *THEN*, BRUCE. HEALY'S THE *GOODS*.



Ted Healy was Crowder's opponent. A city councilman, until now. He was respected. Accomplished.

So why was Boston's biggest mob helping him out?



I felt a sudden surge of red—roiling, angry lightning—

And I wanted—
we wanted—

WH-WHA--?!

We wanted the truth—

Wanted to beat it
out of him, make
him talk—



Instead, I went
home. Tried to
sleep. Tried to
think.

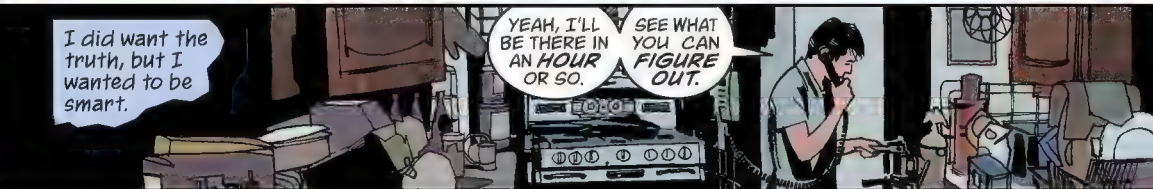
4:35



I did want the
truth, but I
wanted to be
smart.

YEAH, I'LL
BE THERE IN
AN HOUR
OR SO.

SEE WHAT
YOU CAN
FIGURE
OUT.



Eddie Chen was the best
researcher we had. And
it was hard to find a trail
no one else had so much
as sniffed—

—but if he
had a place
to start—

...JUST
NOT **SEEING**
ANYTHING,
BRUCE.

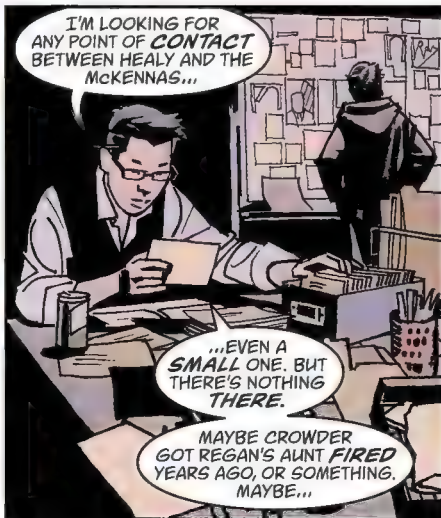
MAYBE IT'S A
COINCIDENCE.



I'M LOOKING FOR
ANY POINT OF **CONTACT**
BETWEEN HEALY AND THE
MCKENNAS...

...EVEN A
SMALL ONE. BUT
THERE'S NOTHING
THERE.

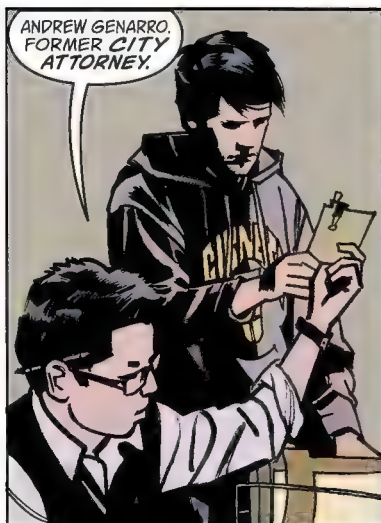
MAYBE CROWDER
GOT REGAN'S AUNT **FIRE**
YEARS AGO, OR SOMETHING.
MAYBE...



...WAIT.

WHAT?

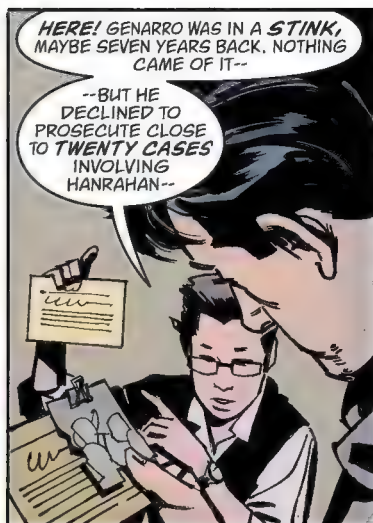




ANDREW GENARRO.
FORMER CITY
ATTORNEY.

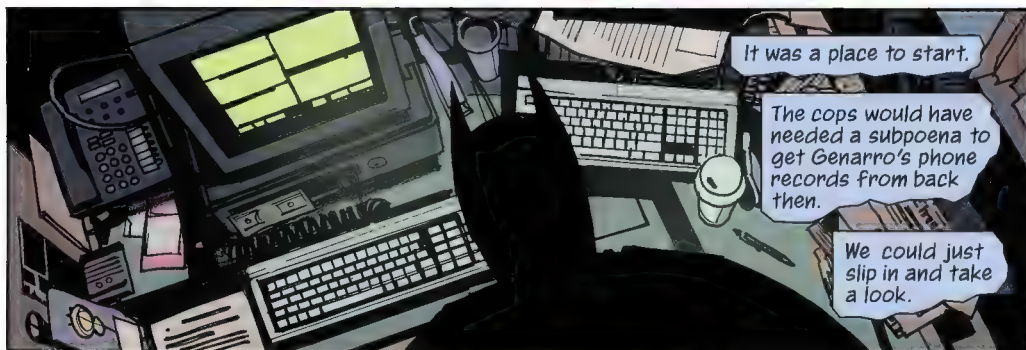


HERE HE IS WITH
HEALY. BUT THERE
WAS SOMETHING--
SOMETHING--



HERE! GENARRO WAS IN A STINK,
MAYBE SEVEN YEARS BACK. NOTHING
CAME OF IT--

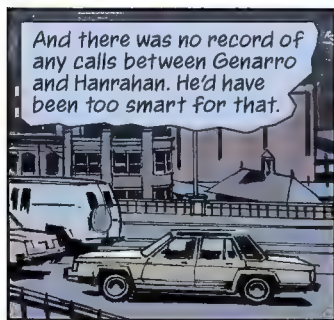
--BUT HE
DECLINED TO
PROSECUTE CLOSE
TO **TWENTY CASES**
INVOLVING
HANRAHAN--



It was a place to start.

The cops would have
needed a subpoena to
get Genarro's phone
records from back
then.

We could just
slip in and take
a look.



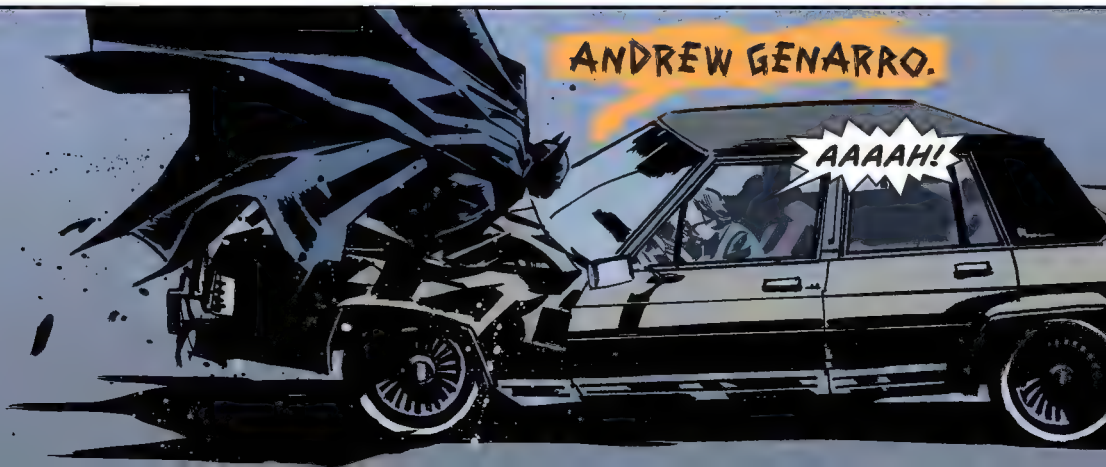
And there was no record of
any calls between Genarro
and Hanrahan. He'd have
been too smart for that.



But he talked to
Healy 67 times.



He'd declined to
run again. Gone
back into private
practice.

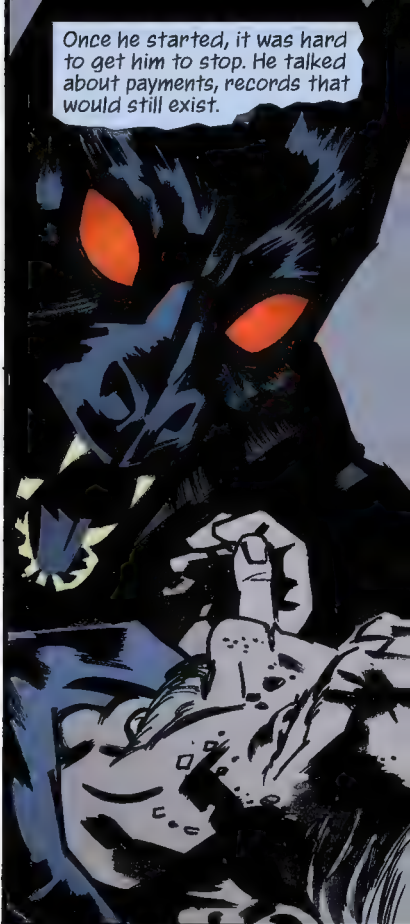


ANDREW GENARRO.

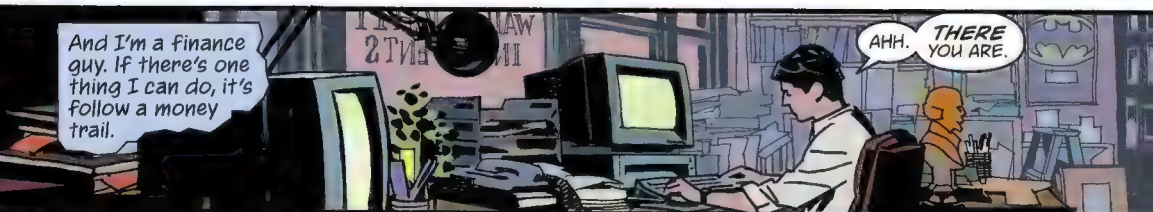
AAAAH!



And he talked.



Once he started, it was hard to get him to stop. He talked about payments, records that would still exist.



And I'm a finance guy. If there's one thing I can do, it's follow a money trail.

AHH. **THERE YOU ARE.**



It was a thin, thin thread. You'd never see it if you didn't know to look for it. And until now, no one had any reason to even try.

But I found other payments, too —

BRUCE?
IT'S DETECTIVE HOOVER AGAIN. THIS IS THE THIRD CALL THIS MORNING--HE SAYS IT'S URGENT?

TELL HIM I'LL GET BACK TO HIM.



Genarro wasn't only talking to me. Whoever he called, it had stirred up Gordon, too.

And that was the last bit of proof I needed.

My buddy. My pal. Friendly officer Gordon Hoover, who'd been around since my folks were killed—

—and through all that—after all that time—

COMMISSIONER?

JIM?

YES, BATMAN. I'M GLAD YOU COULD COME SO SWIFTLY.

WE'VE GOTTEN TERRIBLE NEWS OF A TRAP THAT'S BEEN LAID FOR YOU. AND I'M AFRAID IT'S--

--IT'S ME--!

HAHA
HAHAHA
HAHA!

HAHAHA

WHAT?
N-NO--
NNH!

BIAM

I called Gordon back. It was like I could hear him laughing at me.

I called him back and arranged to meet.

BRUCE!
WHAT IN HELL ARE YOU **DOING**, KID? YOU'VE GOT TO **STOP** IT, OR--

WH--
AWPP!

We didn't talk much, though.

L-LET ME TALK TO BRUCE...

YOU--**LIE** TO US! YOU WORK FOR **HEALY**! FOR **CRIMINALS**!

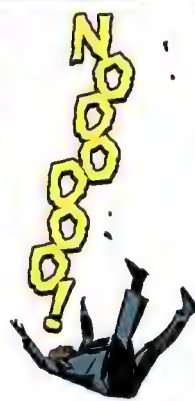
YOU **USE** US-- TO GET THEM **EVEN MORE** **POWER**!


I DIDN'T-- YOU CAN'T **PROVE**--

BRUCE!

BRUCE, C-CALL THIS-- THIS THING **OFF**!

WE CAN MAKE A **DEAL**! THERE'S **MONEY**! MONEY ENOUGH FOR **HIM**, FOR **YOU**--



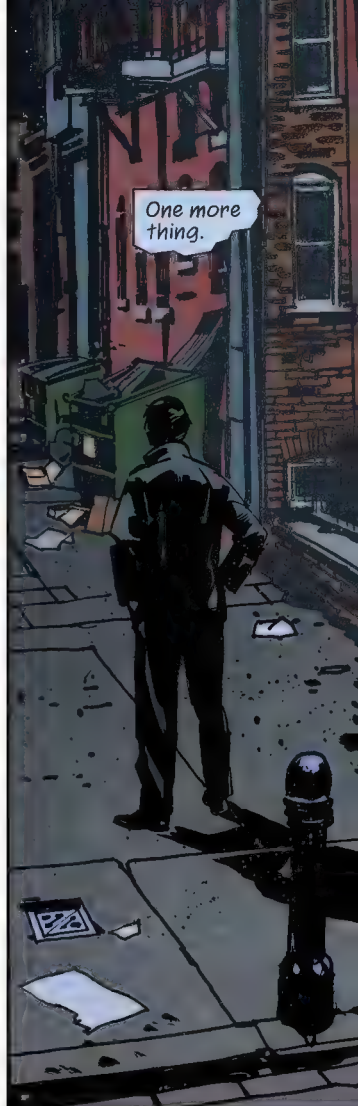


Detective Hoover broke
a leg and three ribs
in the fall.


One more thing that didn't
work out in real life the way
it would have in the comics.



BRUCE...



One more
thing.

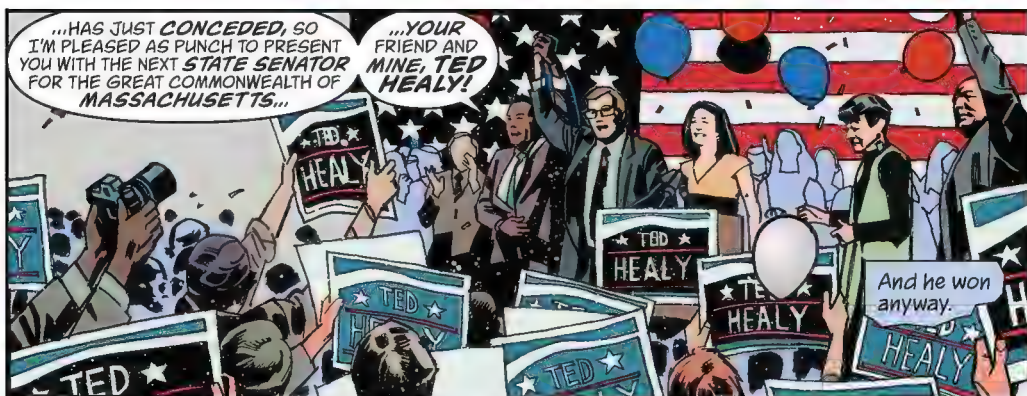
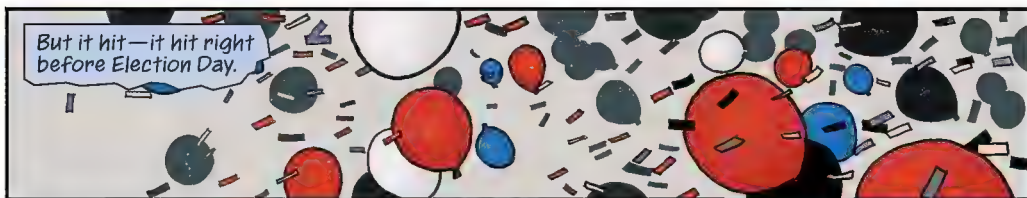


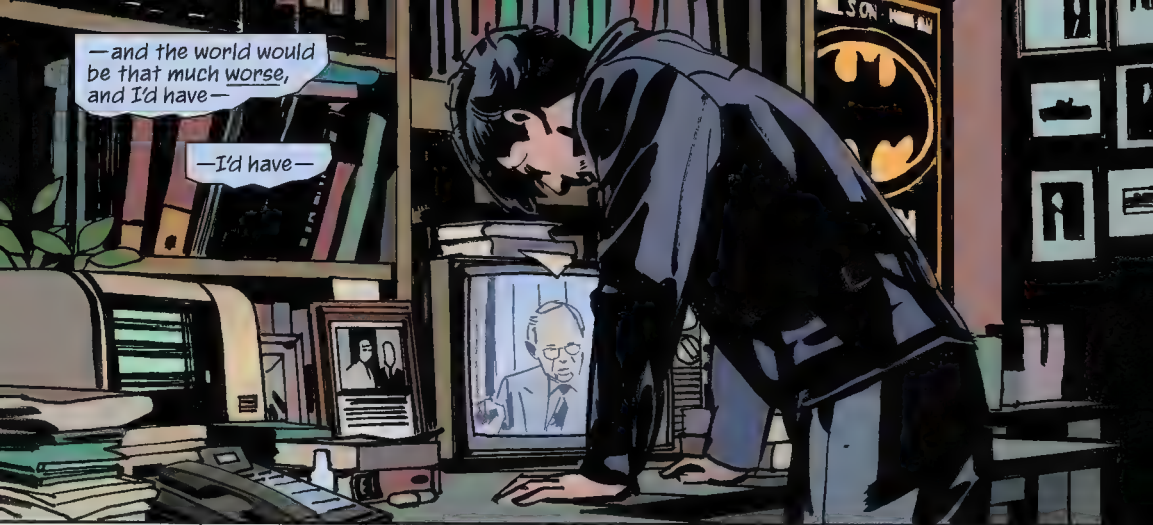
And I feel a storm building,
as much inside me as out.

My own private tornado.
Isn't that what I'd said?

My own tornado.









The world
was worse,
and I'd
helped.



We'd
helped.



We'd tried.
Tried, but—




The city.
The world.

Dark. Vicious. Hateful.
And whatever we tried,
we couldn't—couldn't—


The winds roared in my
mind. My tornado. My
angry tornado.

NOT FAIR NOT FAIR
NOT FAIR NOT FAIR
NOT FAIR NOT FAIR



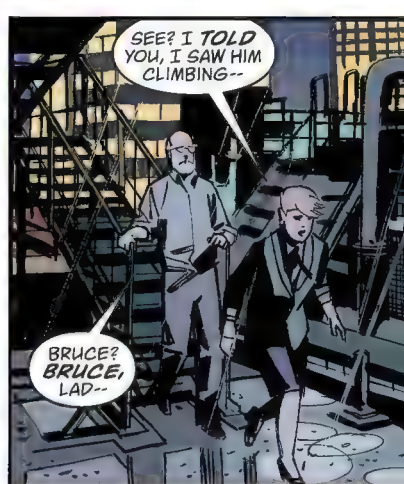
What had she said? He won't change, he can't change. I'd thought she was wrong.

I'd thought that was the problem. If I could convince him, show him. That it mattered, that it wasn't all—



But why should he? Why should he change?

Change to suit a world that—



SEE? I TOLD YOU, I SAW HIM CLIMBING--

BRUCE? BRUCE, LAD--

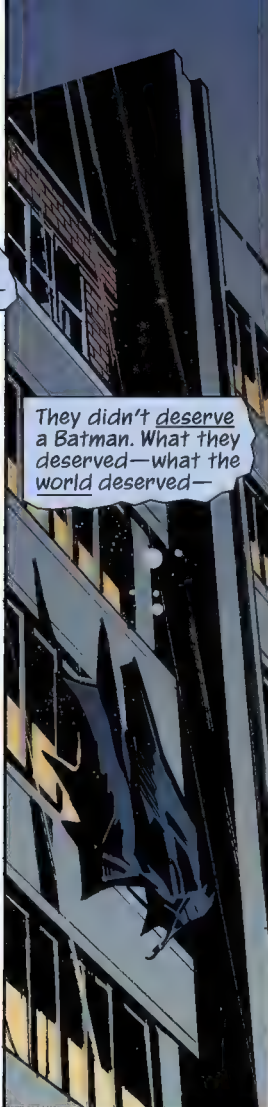


B-BRUCE...?



YOU DON'T
DESERVE HIM!
YOU DON'T--

Deserve.
Deserve—
HAH!



They didn't deserve
a Batman. What they
deserved—what the
world deserved—



BRUCE,
NO!
DON'T!

COME
BACK! COME
BACK AND WE
CAN--

SHH

B-BRUCE...



MR.
JEPSON! OH
MY GOD, MR.
JEPSON!



HERE, LEAN
ON ME! LET ME GET
YOU TO--TO--



I owed Bruce Wainwright a lot.
And still, I found myself wondering
what he could be thinking, why he
did what he did.

But now--
now I was
thinking--

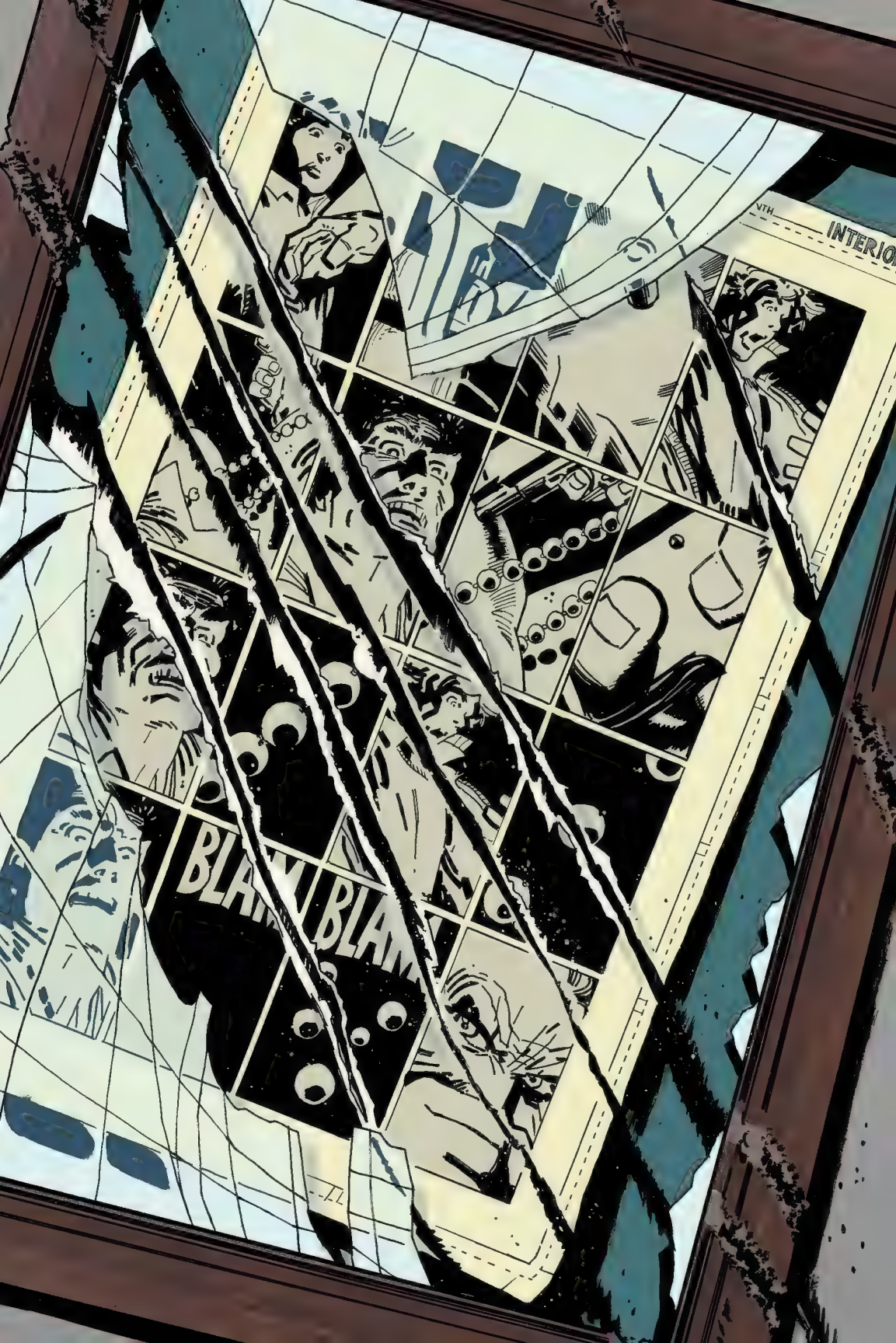


--what in Hell
WAS he--?

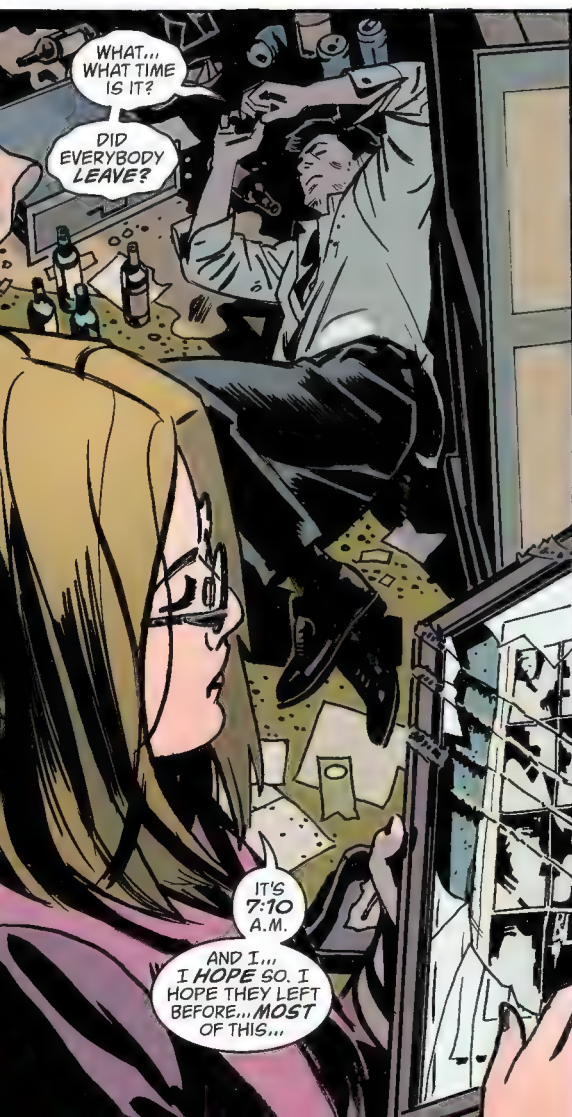


BOOK FOUR: **DARK KNIGHT**

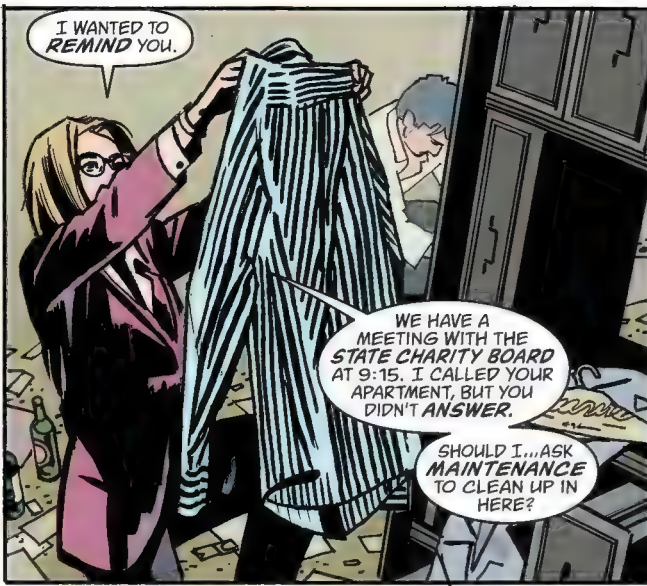








IT'S 7:10 A.M.
AND I... I HOPE SO. I HOPE THEY LEFT BEFORE... **MOST** OF THIS...





What he
can do--

--it's still so hard
to believe, even
after all this
time.



But I can't
not believe.
I've seen it.



Seen it up
on the roof,
only two
years ago...

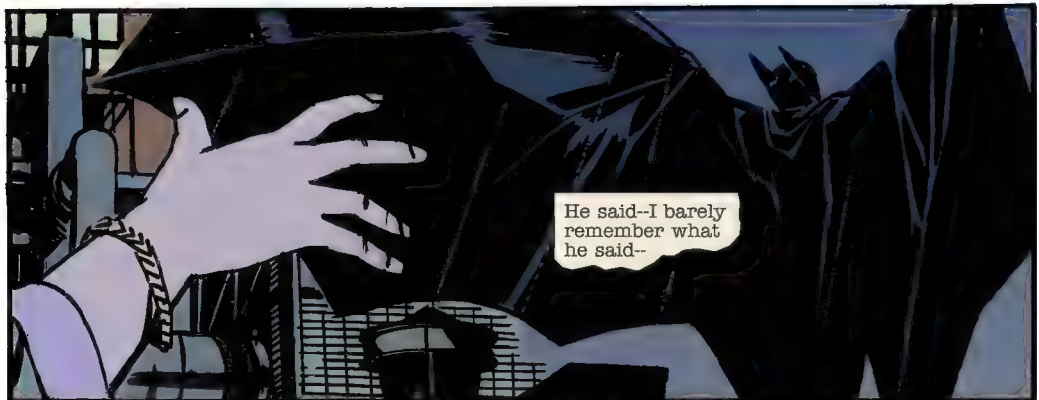


SEE? I TOLD
YOU, I SAW HIM
CLIMBING--

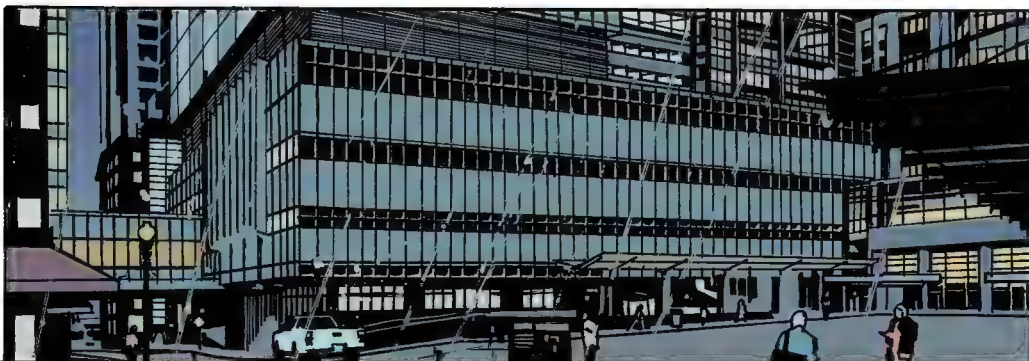
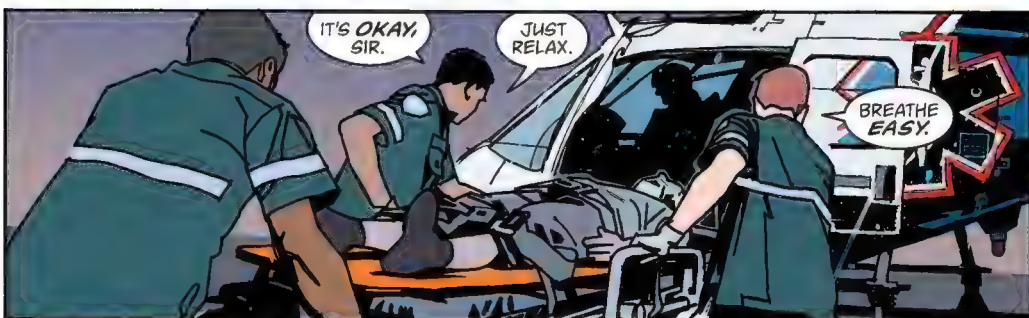
BRUCE?

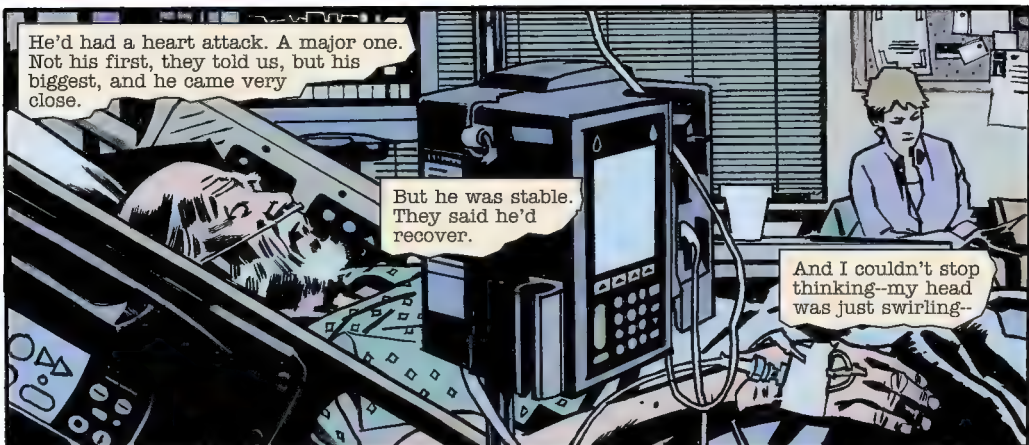


BRUCE,
LAD--



He said--I barely
remember what
he said--

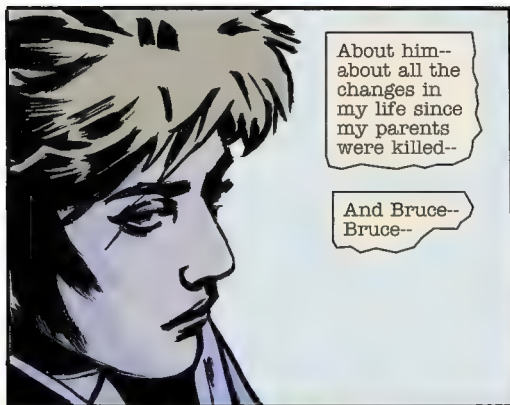




He'd had a heart attack. A major one. Not his first, they told us, but his biggest, and he came very close.

But he was stable. They said he'd recover.

And I couldn't stop thinking--my head was just swirling--



About him--about all the changes in my life since my parents were killed--

And Bruce--Bruce--



IS HE OKAY?



I HEARD... I GOT TO THE OFFICE AND I HEARD. I CAME RIGHT OVER.

HE'S OKAY, RIGHT? HE'S GOING TO BE OKAY?

THEY SAY HE'LL PROBABLY--



OH, GOD, THIS IS MY FAULT. THIS IS ALL MY FAULT.

I DID THIS TO HIM...



MR. WAINWRIGHT--
WHAT WAS
THAT?

WHAT WE
SAW--



NOT...NOT
NOW. NOT
YET.

He wouldn't talk until Mr. Jepson
woke up. But when he did--

He told us--about his parents'
murder, how he'd wished there
was someone like Batman in
the world, someone to make
things fair.

How a Batman
showed up--
like a dream
come true--



But how hard
he was to
control--

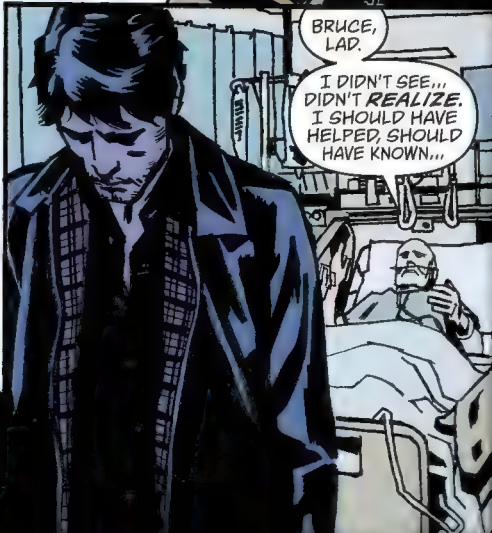
How many
mistakes
Bruce made--

And how--
somehow--
Batman was
his brother,
his stillborn
twin Thomas.



I wouldn't have--
couldn't have
believed it--

Except for what
we'd seen--



BRUCE,
LAD.

I DIDN'T SEE...
DIDN'T *REALIZE*.
I SHOULD HAVE
HELPED, SHOULD
HAVE KNOWN...



NO!
IT'S NOT--IT
WASN'T YOU,
ALFRED--

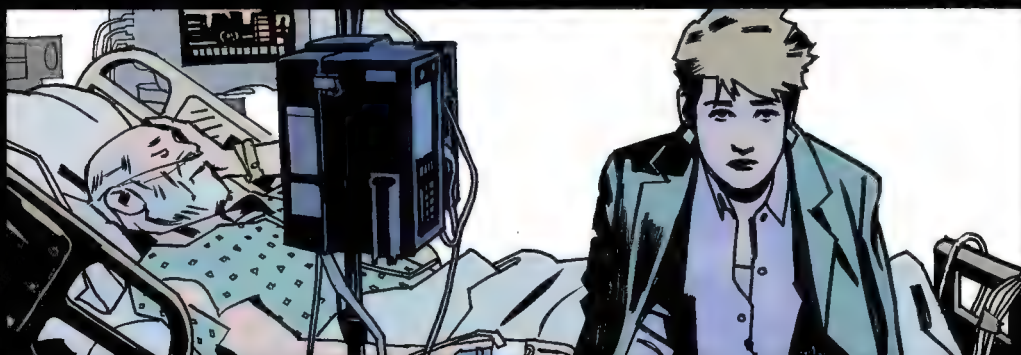
YOU WERE
ALWAYS THERE--
YOU WERE GREAT--
BUT I COULDN'T--



I'VE GOT--
I HAVE TO
GO.

BUT I'LL
BE BACK, I'LL
BE--

LATER
TODAY, I
PROMISE.



SIR,
WHAT--

MS.
HELGELAND.

TAKE...
CARE OF HIM. WATCH
OVER HIM. I'LL ARRANGE
PROMOTIONS. I'LL GIVE
YOU AUTHORITY...TO USE
COMPANY RESOURCES,
WHATEVER YOU
NEED...



JUST...
TAKE CARE OF
HIM...

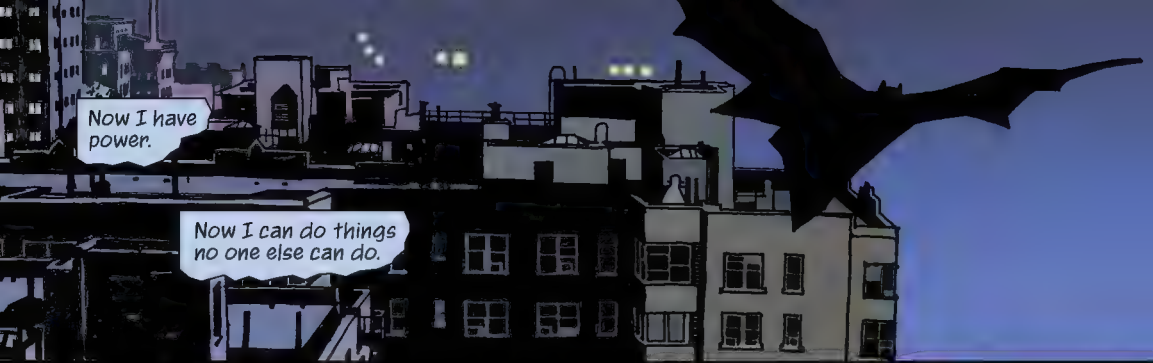
I didn't know
how to do that.

I didn't
even
know
how to
start.

Bruce had been—friendly? helpful? nice?—when we'd met. Even before that, when he used the Wainwright money to send me to school after my folks were killed.

What had happened to that Bruce? Where did he go?





Now I have power.

Now I can do things no one else can do.

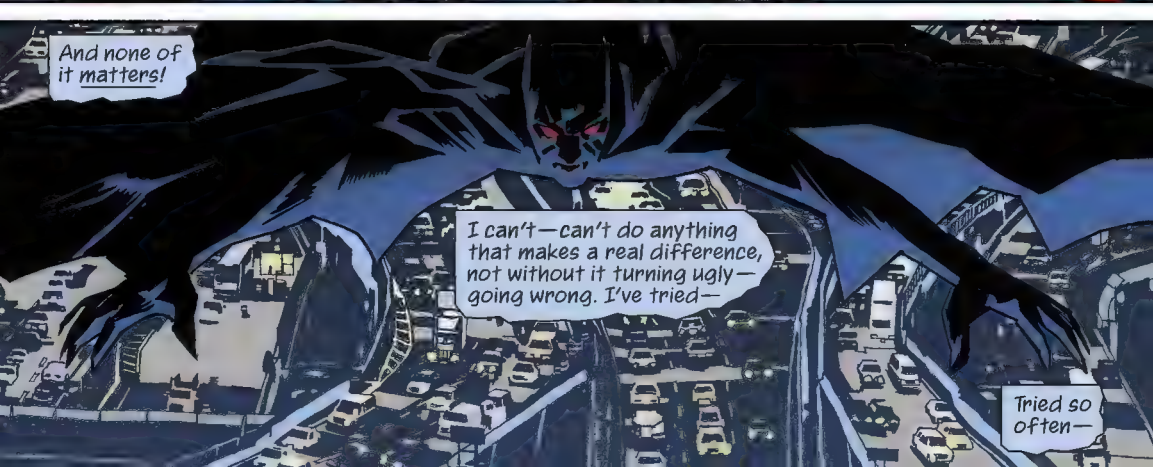


H-AHHHH!

AAAAAAAAA!



WHAT--
WHAT IN--



And none of it matters!

I can't—can't do anything that makes a real difference, not without it turning ugly—going wrong. I've tried—

Tried so often—





Nothing like
it should be—



Nothing—



HHH



WH--





STARTED
THE WHOLE
THING, THEN
FOUGHT
DIRTY--

HAD
A KNIFE,
OR

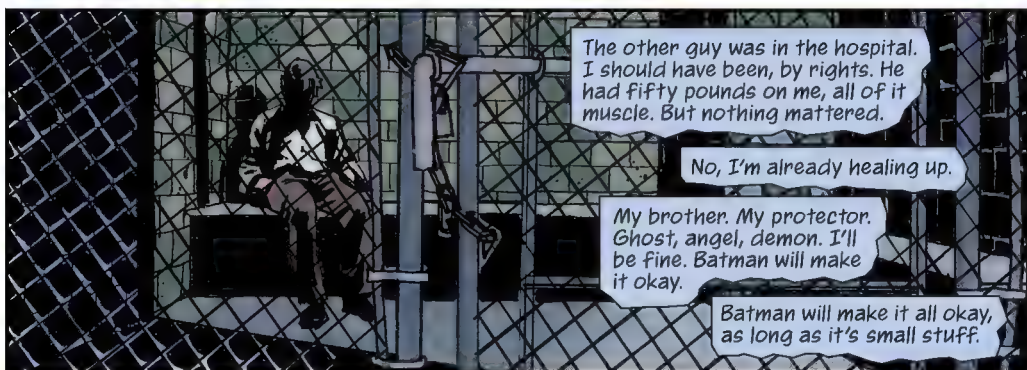
CRAZY--LIKE
AN ANIMAL--

OUGHTA
BE LOCKED
UP FOR



HEH.

NOTHIN'
MATTERS.



The other guy was in the hospital.
I should have been, by rights. He
had fifty pounds on me, all of it
muscle. But nothing mattered.

No, I'm already healing up.

My brother. My protector.
Ghost, angel, demon. I'll
be fine. Batman will make
it okay.

Batman will make it all okay,
as long as it's small stuff.



And I stew in
the booze and
can't help but
wonder—again
and again—
why is it
like this?

Why do I have this
power, if it never
means anything?

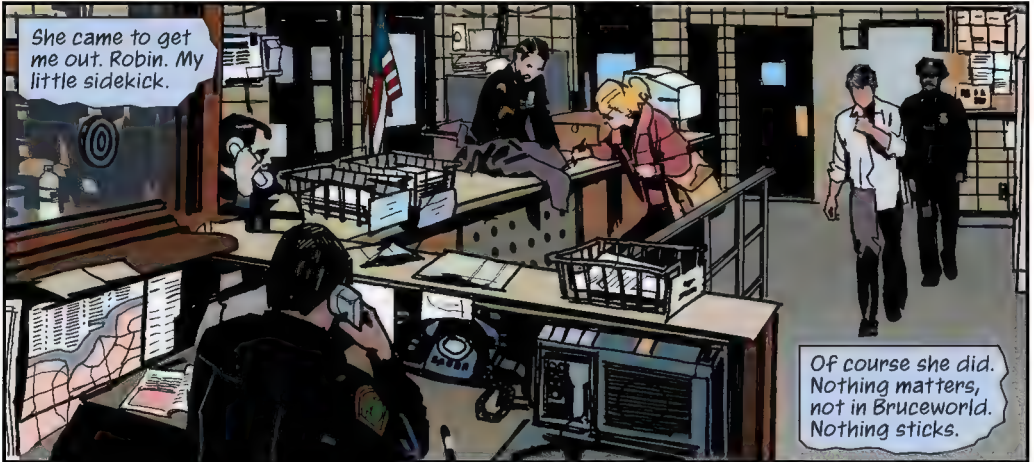
It's like—a sick
game. But who's
playing it?



HEY,
WAINWRIGHT.



YOU'RE
BAILED OUT.
LET'S GO.



She came to get
me out. Robin. My
little sidekick.

Of course she did.
Nothing matters,
not in Bruceworld.
Nothing sticks.



HEY, HEY...
MADE TH' FRONT
PAGE AGAIN!

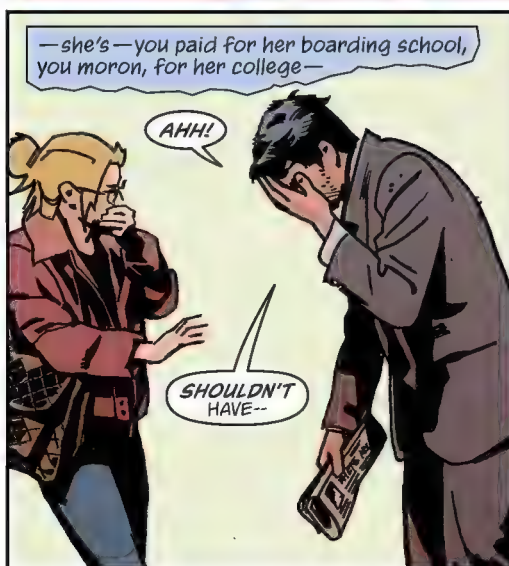
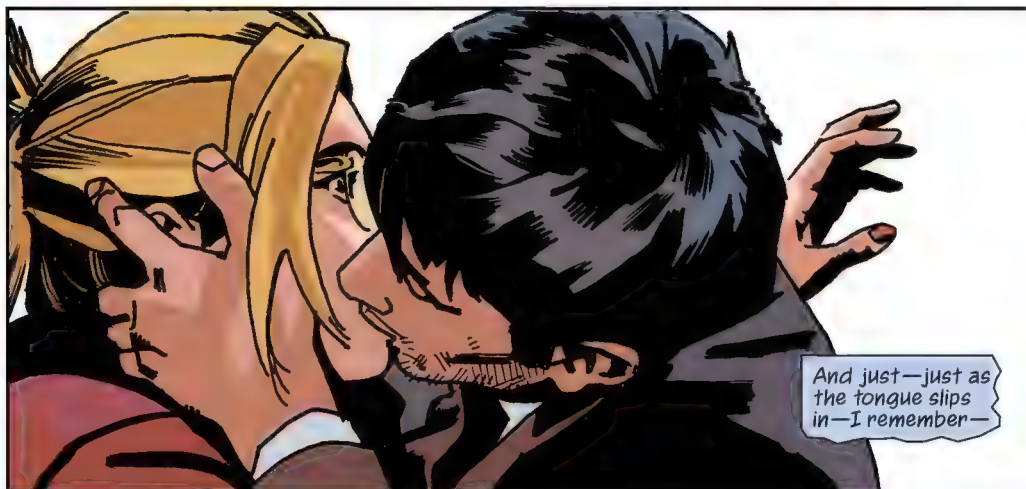
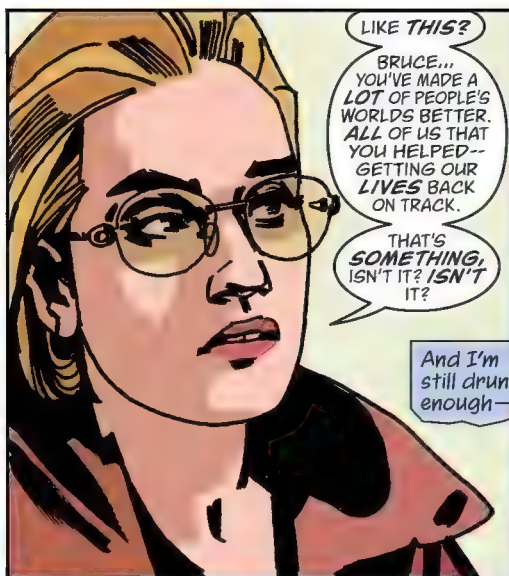
MR.
WAINWRIGHT--
BRUCE--YOU
HAVE TO SEE A
DOCTOR...

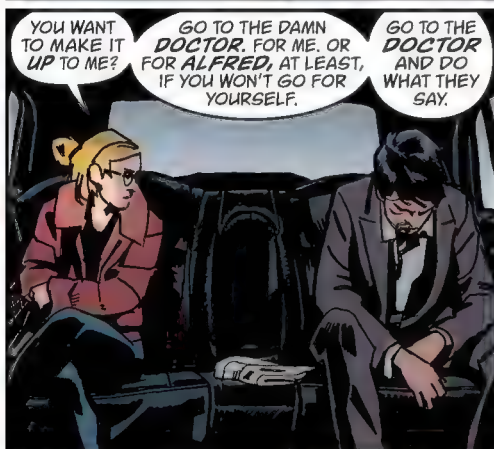
Whatever I do, it
gets taken care
of, doesn't it?

Whatever I do.



I JUST...
I WANTED TO
MAKE THE WORLD
BETTER...







I need a freakin' keeper.

So maybe she's right. Maybe a doctor—

DID I HEAR THAT RIGHT? A BAT-CREATURE?



IT'S JUST--DREAMS; I GUESS YOU'D CALL IT. BECAUSE I LIKED BATMAN SO MUCH AS A KID. BUT NOW--

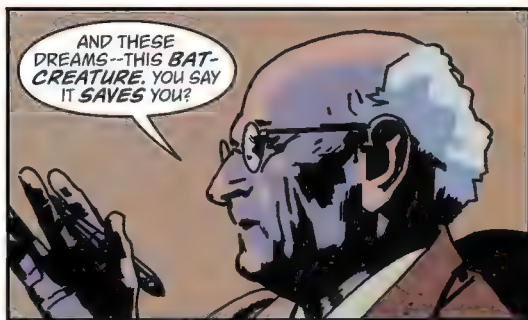
I try to explain, without explaining—

EVERYTHING AROUND ME--IT'S LIKE I CAN'T MAKE AN IMPACT ON THE WORLD, EVEN THOUGH I HAVE ALL THIS POWER--

BUT EVEN IF I SCREW UP, IT GETS PAPERED OVER. CAN'T DO ANYTHING RIGHT, BUT CAN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG, EITHER, NOT THAT LASTS EITHER WAY.



I JUST-- I FEEL LIKE I DON'T HAVE ANY CONTROL.



AND THESE DREAMS--THIS BAT-CREATURE, YOU SAY IT SAVES YOU?



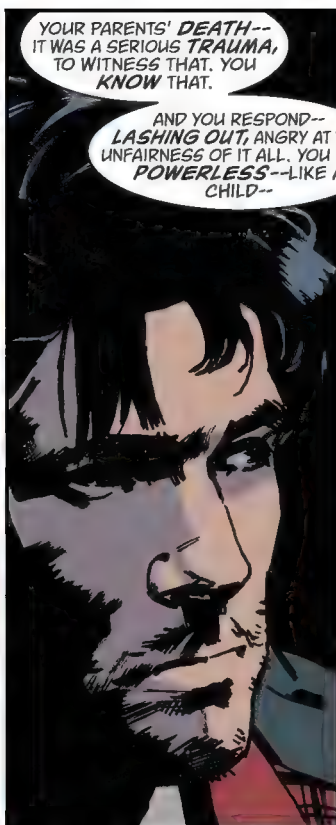
HE HELPS ME. AND HE SAVES ME. EVER SINCE I WAS A KID. EVER SINCE-- THEN.

HE'S PROTECTING ME. BUT HE'S PART OF ME, TOO, I KNOW THAT. AND IT'S--IT'S A LITTLE SCARY--



I'M NOT **SURPRISED**.

THIS BAT-CREATURE--IT IS A **DEFENSE MECHANISM**, SURELY YOU SEE THAT. BUT IT IS NOT **PROTECTING** YOU. IT IS HOLDING YOU BACK.



YOUR PARENTS' **DEATH**--IT WAS A SERIOUS **TRAUMA**, TO WITNESS THAT. YOU **KNOW** THAT.

AND YOU RESPOND--**LASHING OUT**, ANGRY AT THE UNFAIRNESS OF IT ALL. YOU FEEL **POWERLESS**--LIKE A CHILD--

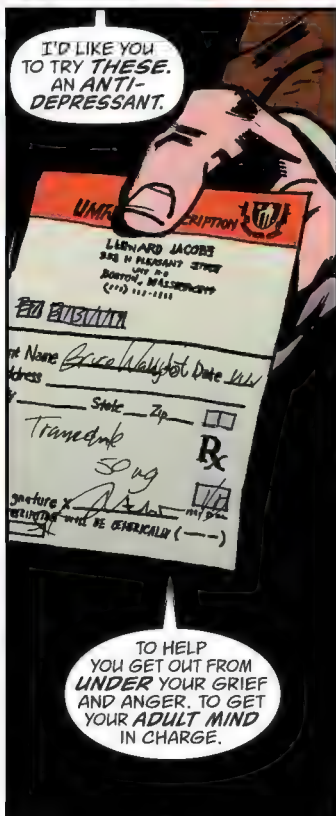


--AND SO YOU CREATED THIS **WISH-FULFILLMENT FANTASY**. POWERFUL. PROTECTIVE. **FIERCE**.

BUT IT IS **STILL** A CHILD, WITHIN. **ANGRY**, GRIEVING, LOST--IT ACTS LIKE A **CHILD**, LIKE A CHILD'S FANTASY--AND ALLOWS YOU TO, AS WELL.



BUT--I'M TRYING--



I'D LIKE YOU TO TRY **THESE**. AN **ANTI-DEPRESSANT**.

UMASS PRESCRIPTION

LLEWARD JACOBS
245 H PLAZANT STREET
APT 202
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
(617) 552-1111

DR. JACOBSON

Patient Name Bruce Wayne Date 10/1

Address _____

State _____ Zip _____

Trained by Dr. J ☒ R ☒ M

Signature [Signature] ☒ M ☒ D

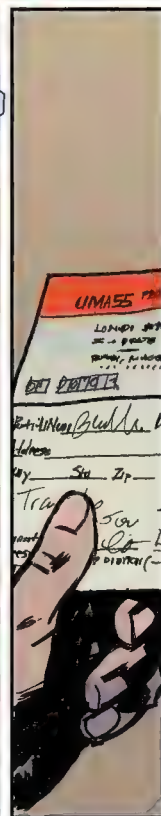
RETURNING WILL BE OBLIGATED ()

TO HELP YOU GET OUT FROM **UNDER** YOUR GRIEF AND ANGER. TO GET YOUR **ADULT MIND** IN CHARGE.



Pills?

But--what about Tommy?



UMASS PRESCRIPTION

LLEWARD JACOBS
245 H PLAZANT STREET
APT 202
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
(617) 552-1111

DR. JACOBSON

Patient Name Bruce Wayne Date 10/1

Address _____

State _____ Zip _____

Trained by Dr. J ☒ R ☒ M

Signature [Signature] ☒ M ☒ D

RETURNING WILL BE OBLIGATED ()



HERE YOU GO, SIR.



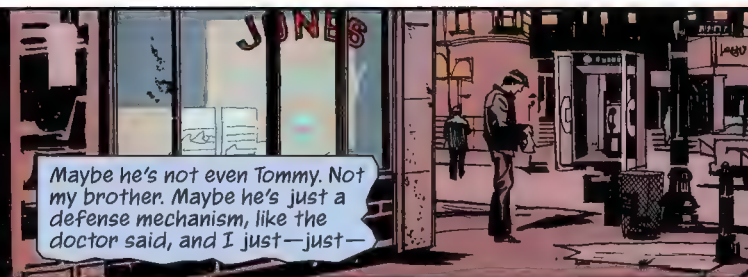
I don't know. The pills—they might kill Tommy.

Or break my connection to him, which might amount to the same thing.

Or maybe—maybe they'd release him, let him go. To wherever he's supposed to be.



I just don't know.

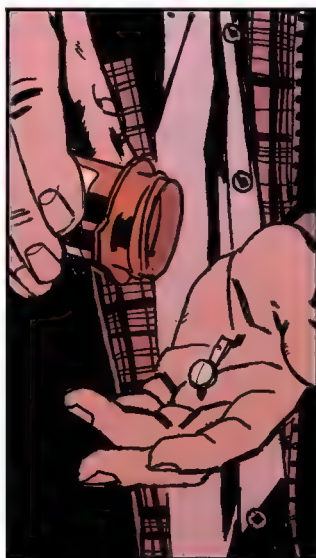


Maybe he's not even Tommy. Not my brother. Maybe he's just a defense mechanism, like the doctor said, and I just—just—



But I promised.

And Alfred, Robin, they do care—they're worried—

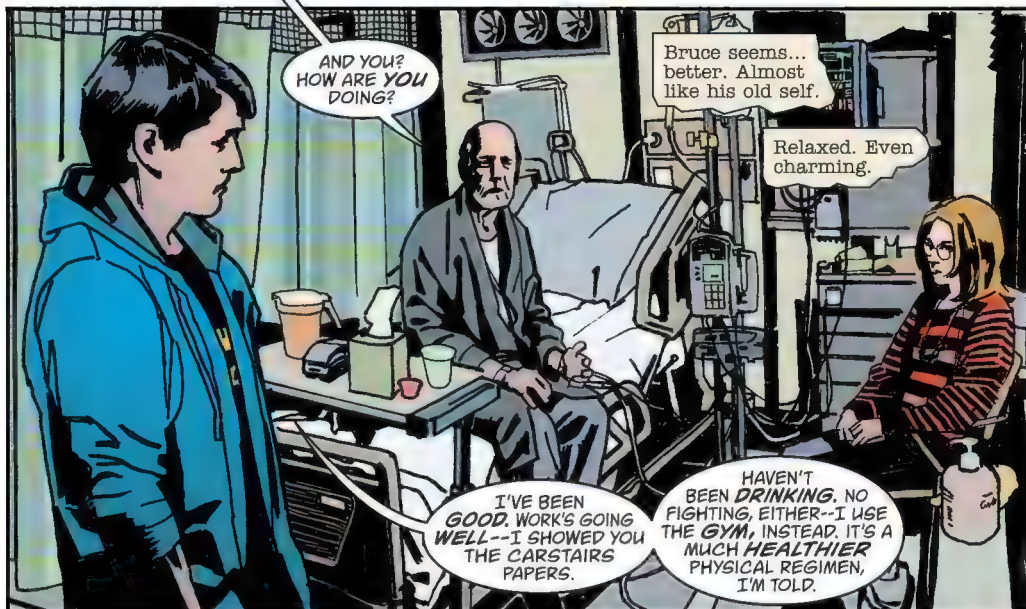


I promised.



OH, YOU KNOW *ME*. YOUR OLD UNCLE ALFRED'S NOT THAT EASY TO GET *RID OF*, BRUCE.

AND I'M PAYING *FAR TOO MUCH* FOR THEM TO LET ME *DIE*.



AND YOU? HOW ARE *YOU* DOING?

Bruce seems... better. Almost like his old self.

Relaxed. Even charming.

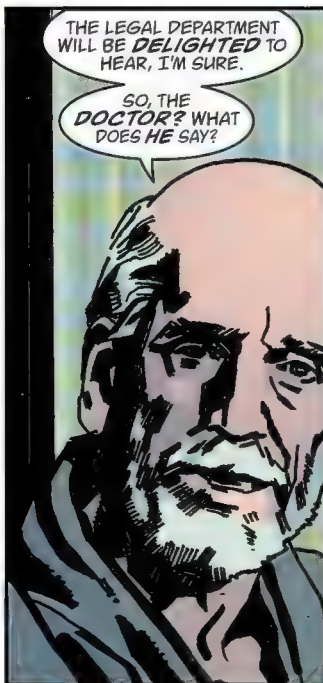
I'VE BEEN *GOOD*. WORK'S GOING *WELL*--I SHOWED YOU THE CARSTAIRS PAPERS.

HAVEN'T BEEN *DRINKING*. NO FIGHTING, EITHER--I USE THE *GYM*, INSTEAD. IT'S A MUCH *HEALTHIER* PHYSICAL REGIMEN, I'M TOLD.



AND BEST OF ALL, I HAVEN'T BEEN ARRESTED IN *WEEKS*.

THE POLICE ARE GOING TO GIVE ME A *THIRTY-DAY CHIP*, I THINK.



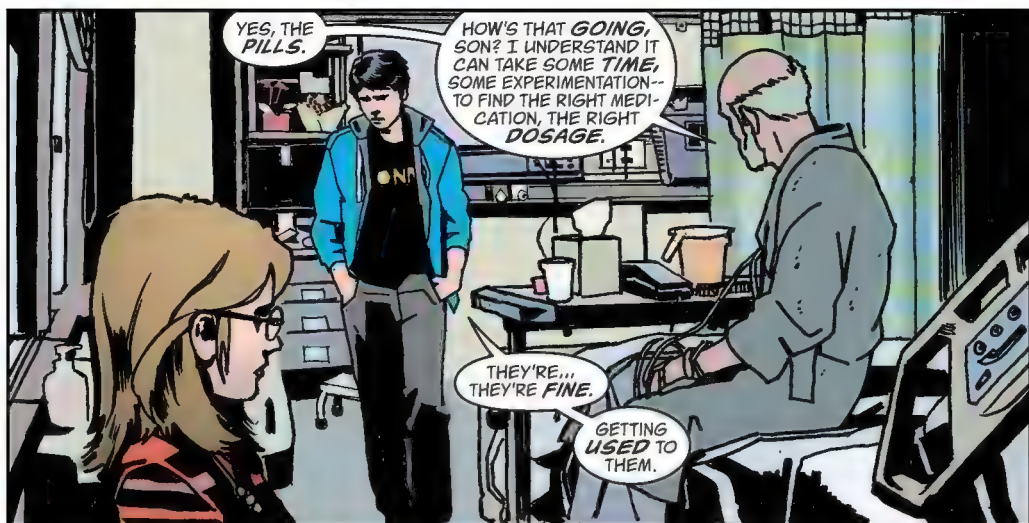
THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT WILL BE *DELIGHTED* TO HEAR, I'M SURE.

SO, THE *DOCTOR*? WHAT DOES HE SAY?



But it's like--like he's thinking about whatever he says before he says it--

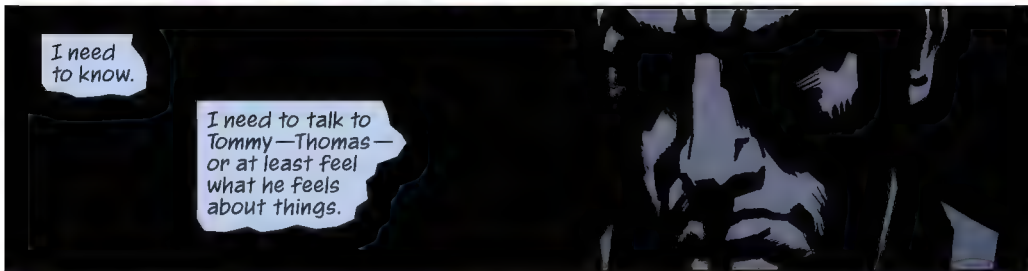
WE'RE... GIVING IT SOME *TIME* TO LET THE *PILLS* WORK BEFORE WE *TALK* FURTHER.





I stop taking
the pills.

Just for a little
while. Just as an
experiment.



I need
to know.

I need to talk to
Tommy—Thomas—
or at least feel
what he feels
about things.



And—and—

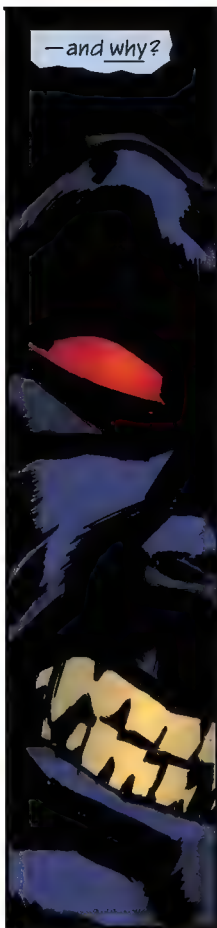
They know. I'd told
them. How this feels.

How much it
means to me
to have a
brother. A
champion.
Someone in
my corner,
who wants
to make
things
right.



How can they want to
take that away from
me? How can they
want to kill that? To
kill Tommy? Alfred
wouldn't want to
do that.

So who
would—



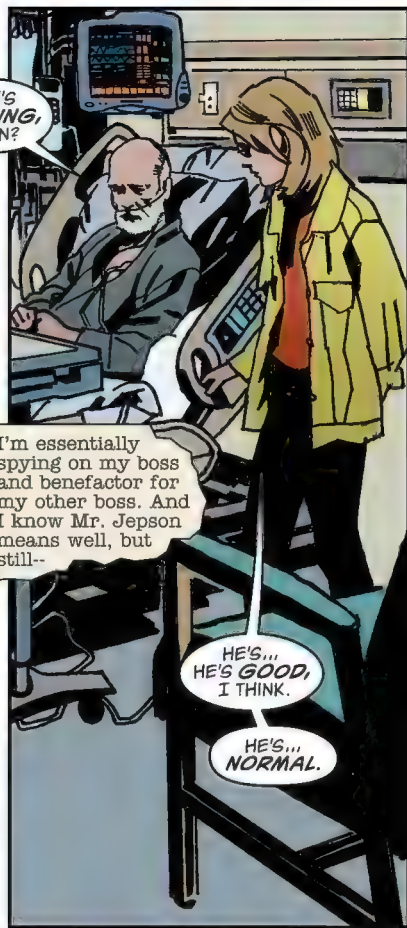
—and why?



HOW
IS HE?

HOW'S
HE **DOING**,
ROBIN?

I'm essentially
spying on my boss
and benefactor for
my other boss. And
I know Mr. Jepson
means well, but
still--



HE'S...
HE'S **GOOD**,
I THINK.

HE'S...
NORMAL.



HE'S WORKING
REGULAR HOURS,
HE'S MEETING WITH **CLIENTS**,
ATTENDING **STAFF**
CONFERENCES...

HOW'S HIS
MANNER? DOES HE SEEM
RELAXED?



WELL--**NO**.
NOT REALLY.

HE'S
BUSINESSLIKE,
BUT MAYBE A LITTLE ON
EDGE, LIKE HE'S **WARY**, OR
FEELS LIKE SOMEONE'S
FOLLOWING
HIM.

AND
AFTER
ALL...

...SOMEONE
IS.

THE PRIVATE
INVESTIGATION FIRM
IS DOING A **THOROUGH**
JOB, AND I DON'T THINK
HE'S **SPOTTED** THEM,
BUT...



C-CHK
C-CHK



TELL THEM TO
BACK OFF, THEN.
LET HIM HAVE SOME
AIR.

I DON'T--
I DON'T **LIKE**
THIS, MY DEAR,
AND I KNOW
YOU DON'T
EITHER.

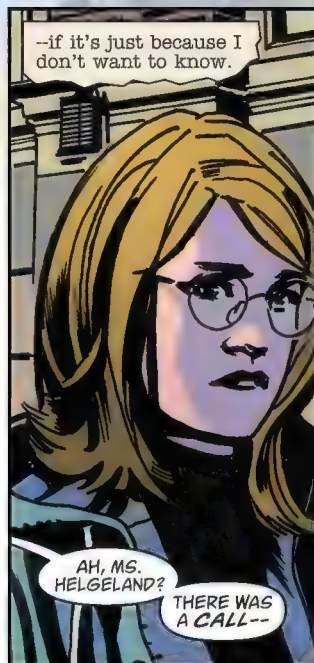
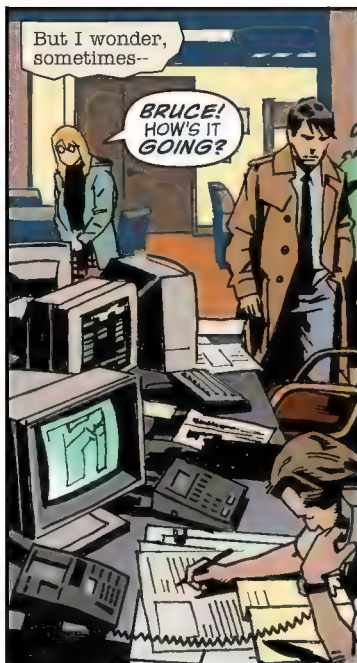


I JUST
WANT WHAT'S **BEST** FOR
HIM. AND I DON'T KNOW
HOW TO **ACHIEVE**
THAT.

I WISH--I
WISH HIS **PARENTS**
WERE HERE--

Things seem all right for a while.

Time passes. I don't—I avoid Bruce, a little. I tell myself it's because he needs space, and Mr. Jepson said to ease off.





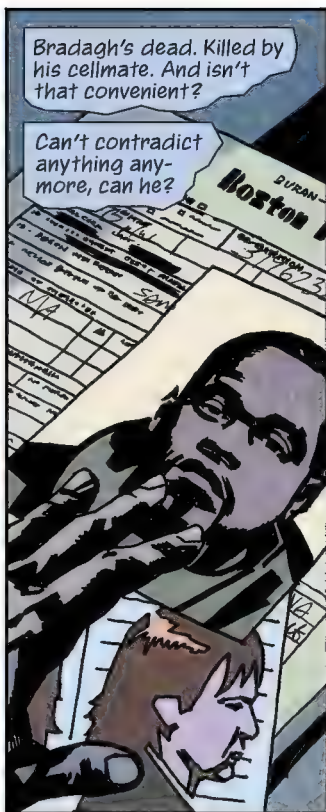
I don't know how much of what I'm being told is true. Don't even know how much I see is true.

I've been lied to before.



I go back to the beginning. To Donnie Bradagh. The man who killed my parents.

But did he? Or was that just a story I was fed?



Bradagh's dead. Killed by his cellmate. And isn't that convenient?

Can't contradict anything anymore, can he?



They didn't have enough on him, at first. They needed me to identify him. And I'd seen him through Tommy's eyes.

Later, his partners confessed, pinned the killings on him. They even recovered some of my mom's jewelry.

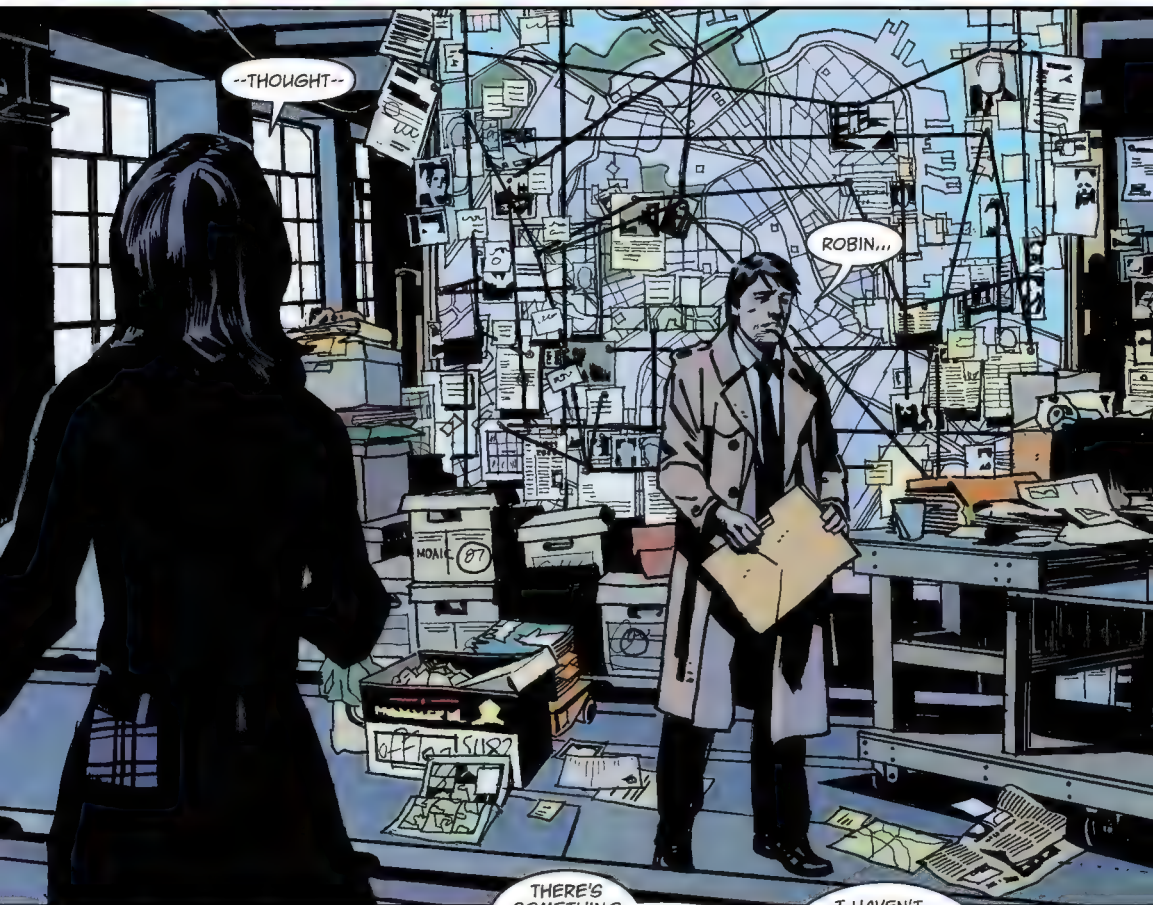


But they could have planted it. They could have framed things so I saw whatever they wanted.

If only I knew for sure what—



OH MY GOD.





OH, BRUCE.

YOU'RE NOT--
NOT TAKING THE
PILLS AT ALL,
ARE YOU?



I'M--I'VE
BEEN MEANING TO
ASK FOR A DIFFERENT
PRESCRIPTION--



I'VE JUST--
I'VE BEEN SO
BUSY--

BUT
THIS--THIS IS
PRIVATE!

IT'S MY
COMPANY--I'M
ENTITLED TO SOME
PRIVACY IF I WANT
IT! A PLACE TO
THINK, TO FIGURE
THINGS OUT! YOU
HAVE NO RIGHT
TO--

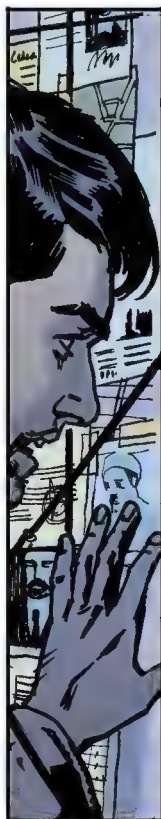


IT WAS IMPORTANT--
YOU WEREN'T ANSWERING
YOUR PHONE, BUT YOU
NEED TO--



WHAT? WHAT
COULD POSSIBLY
BE SO IMPORTANT
THAT YOU HAVE TO
BREAK INTO
MY--

BRUCE,
IT'S YOUR
UNCLE, MR.
JEPSON.
HE--



It was his heart.

He'd been in and out of the hospital since that other heart attack. The one I triggered. Mostly in. He'd gotten to know the staff well.

"I'm just old," he'd tell me. "I'm wearing out. I've outlived so many friends. I never thought I'd still be here after all this time."

He told me he was glad to have seen me grow into such a fine man.

When he went, he said, I should never think it was my fault.

Oh, I know it's not my fault.

They did this. They don't want me figuring it out. They want me distracted, tied up with grief. Anything to stop me looking.

BUT I'M ON TO THEM.

BRUCE, WHAT?



ROBIN, I WANT YOU TO **DO** SOMETHING FOR ME. I KNOW IT'S GOING TO SOUND **STRANGE**, BUT...

WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO **DO**?



YOU NEED TO GET OUT OF **TOWN** FOR A WHILE. I DON'T WANT YOU GETTING **HURT**.



WAIT A MINUTE--



I'M GOING TO **HANDLE** THIS.



BRUCE, YOU **CAN'T**--



I'M CLOSING IN ON THEM. AND THEY **KNOW** IT. IF THEY'D GO AFTER ALFRED TO STOP ME, THEY'LL GO AFTER **YOU**, TOO.

SO YOU NEED TO BE SOMEWHERE **SAFE**. THE COMPANY WILL PAY.



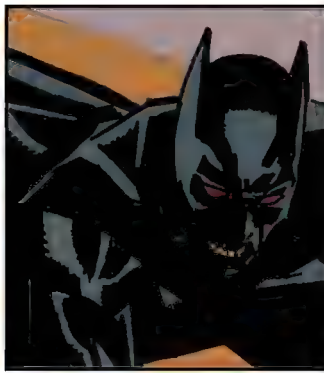
IT WON'T TAKE LONG. I'M **CLOSE**. I'LL GET TO THE **TRUTH**. I'LL FIX IT **ALL**.



THIS IS **CRAZY**, BRUCE. LISTEN TO YOURSELF. JUST **LISTEN**.

THIS IS YOUR **DELUSIONS** TALKING. YOU HAVE TO LET **GO** OF THIS. SEE THE DOCTOR. YOU **HAVE** TO--



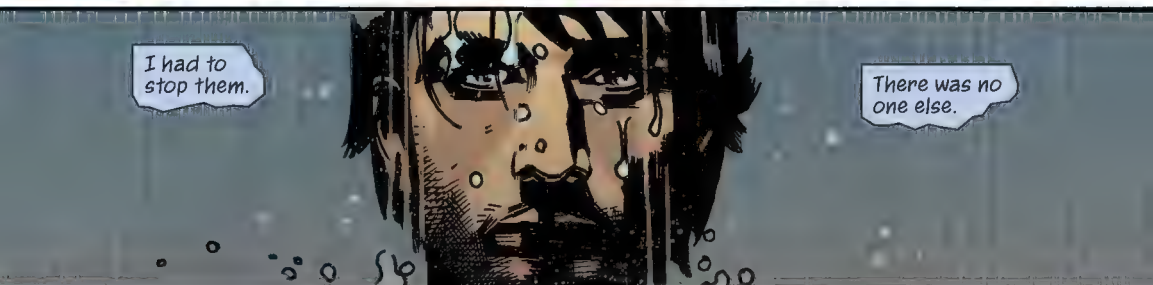






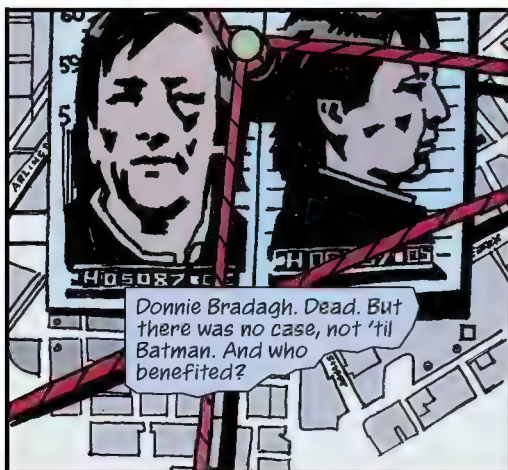
I had to
stop them.

There was no
one else.

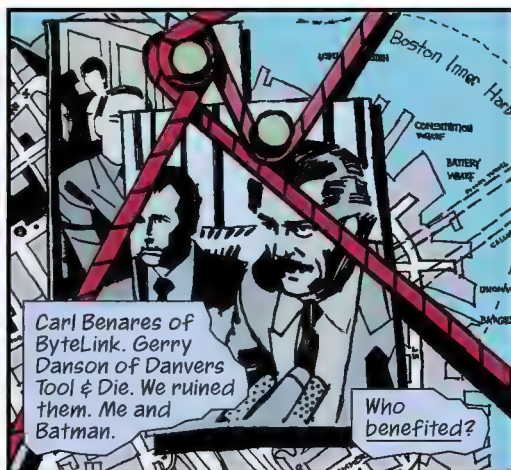


It was all tied
together. It
had to be.

Look at who
benefits. Look
at who
benefits.

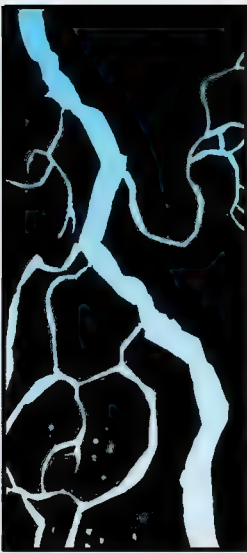


Donnie Bradagh. Dead. But
there was no case, not 'til
Batman. And who
benefited?



Carl Benares of
Bytelink. Gerry
Danson of Danvers
Tool & Die. We ruined
them. Me and
Batman.

Who
benefited?



Dickie McKenna.
I couldn't hurt
him much.

Like he had
protection.



Couldn't stop Ted
Healy, either. He
got elected.



He wasn't tied to
Bradagh. Or the
others. But
someone was.



Someone
connected
to almost
all of them.



Probably
all of them,
if I could
figure out
how.

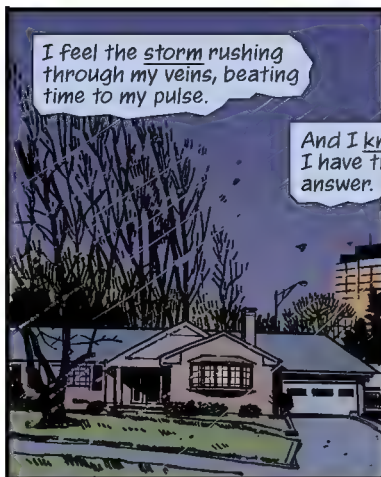


He's my link. He's
my door in.



He'll rip it
all open
for me.

I'll make
him.



I feel the storm rushing through my veins, beating time to my pulse.

And I know I have the answer.



He retired. That's what they said. Retired. Hah!



GORDON.



GORDON!



I had to find him.

I just knew I had to find him--that it was bad, tonight--

That tonight was what mattered--



And I wondered--where did the storm come from? There was no warning--it was supposed to be clear--

But--



There was only one place left he could be. That I could think of, at least.

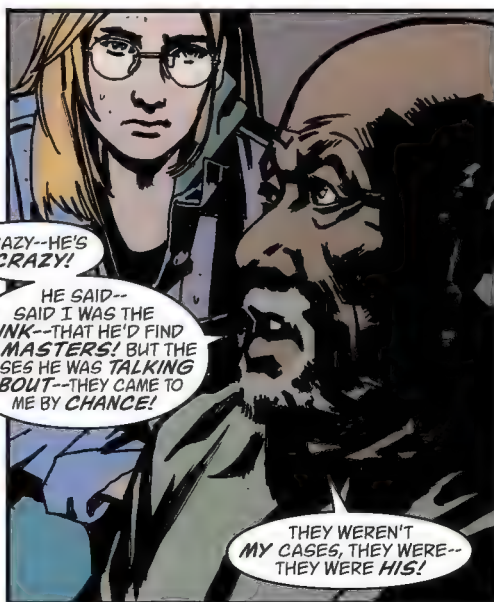
He'd had Eddie Chen keep tabs on the address--there shouldn't have been any reason to--

WHAT DID YOU DO, BRUCE...



GORDON HOOVER! MY GOD--

H-HUHH--



CRAZY--HE'S CRAZY!

HE SAID--SAID I WAS THE LINK--THAT HE'D FIND MY MASTERS! BUT THE CASES HE WAS TALKING ABOUT--THEY CAME TO ME BY CHANCE!


THEY WEREN'T MY CASES, THEY WERE--THEY WERE HIS!





**STILL
THINK I
CAN'T HURT
YOU?**

**STILL THINK
I CAN'T ACCOMPLISH
ANYTHING?**



I don't--I should be home--
I should be somewhere
safe, letting the police
handle this.

But something
tells me they
can't. And I--

I have to be here.
I don't know why,
but I know I
have to help--







HA HA!
YOU CAN'T,
YOU KNOW!

YOU THOUGHT
YOU COULD MAKE THE
WORLD FAIR! THOUGHT
YOU COULD MAKE IT
ALL NICE!

A FANTASY!
A KID'S DREAM!
THERE'S NO
"FAIR!"

THERE'S
ONLY US!

DOING AS
WE PLEASE!

CRUSHING
WHOEVER WE
WANT TO!

NO! I
WILL STOP YOU!
SOMEONE HAS TO
STOP YOU!

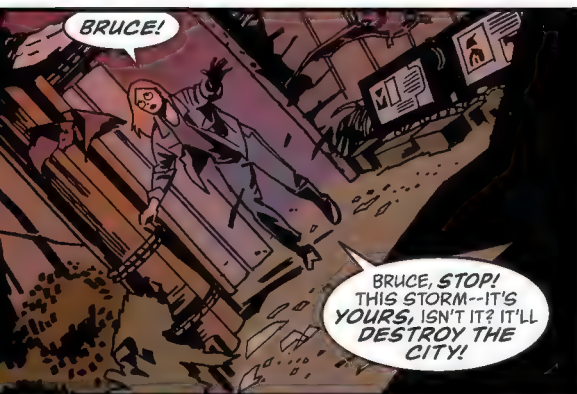
SOMEONE
HAS TO TEAR THIS
WHOLE UGLY MESS
DOWN!



I can do it.
Right now.

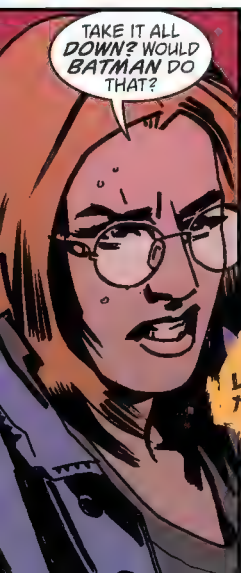
End them all.

Break their power,
cleanse Boston—



BRUCE!

BRUCE, STOP!
THIS STORM--IT'S
YOURS, ISN'T IT? IT'LL
DESTROY THE
CITY!



TAKE IT ALL
DOWN? WOULD
BATMAN DO
THAT?



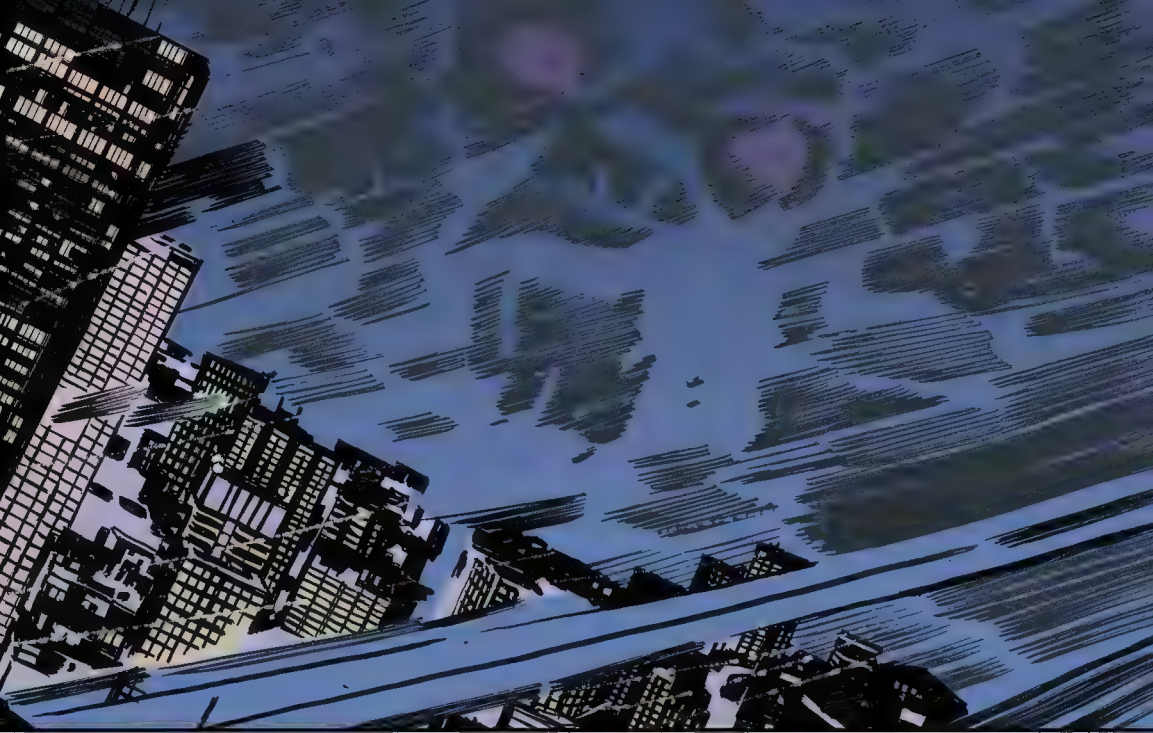
YOU
HAVEN'T
SEEN IT
LIKE I HAVE!
THE LIVES
THEY'VE
RUINED!

THE LIVES
THEY'VE MADE
ME RUIN!



WHAT ABOUT MY
LIFE? YOU SAVED ME,
REMEMBER?

IF NOT FOR
YOU, WHERE WOULD
I BE NOW?



AND IF IT
DOES?

I TOLD
YOU TO
GO.



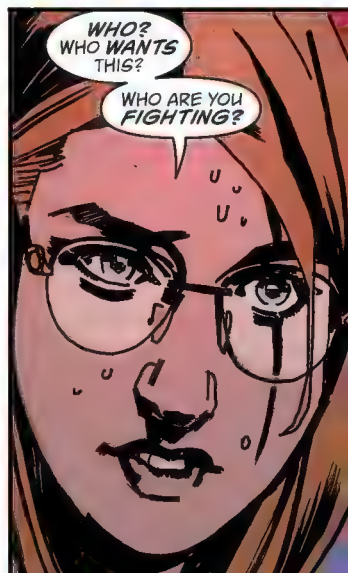
IT DOESN'T
DESERVE TO
SURVIVE! I CAN
TAKE IT ALL
DOWN!

IT'S
UNCLEAN--
UNFAIR--



THEY
WANT ME TO
KILL TOMMY,
ROBIN.

HE'S
JUST A KID!
A CHILD! HOW
COULD I--



WHO?
WHO WANTS
THIS?

WHO ARE YOU
FIGHTING?





And there was a--

It was soundless,
deafening--



And when it
faded--



BRUCE...?

She asked me who
I saw. Who was
really there.



There was
no one.

No one
at all.

Was it all just...ghosts?
Just something simple
to fight? Someone
to punch?

Was there
ever any—

NNNN...

BRUCE?

HN?



BRUCE.



YOU
SAFE
NOW.
SAFE.



YOU
SAFE.



OH, THOMAS.

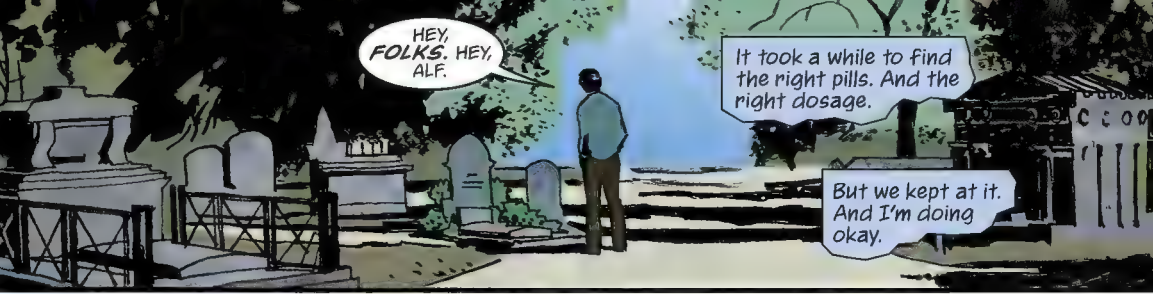
TOMMY...



And I don't know who
I'm crying for. Tommy?
Alfred? Mom and
Dad? Me?

But for the first time
in a long time, I feel
like—like—

Like maybe the sun
might come up.



HEY,
FOLKS. HEY,
ALF.

It took a while to find
the right pills. And the
right dosage.

But we kept at it.
And I'm doing
okay.



NOT
MUCH TO
REPORT. WE'RE
EXPANDING THE
SPONSORSHIP
PROGRAM FOR
ORPHANS OF CRIME.
ROBIN'S STILL
RUNNING IT. IT'S
DOING REALLY
WELL.

AND ROBIN,
SHE'S DATING A GUY,
PETE, IN ACCOUNTING.
THEY SEEM GOOD
TOGETHER.

I'VE BEEN
SEEING **SHARON**
SOME, FROM **COLLEGE**?
I DON'T THINK YOU EVER
MET HER, ALF. SHE'S A
HUMAN RIGHTS
ATTORNEY
NOW.



"YOU'D LIKE HER."



THANKS FOR
COMING. YOU
WANT A LIFT?

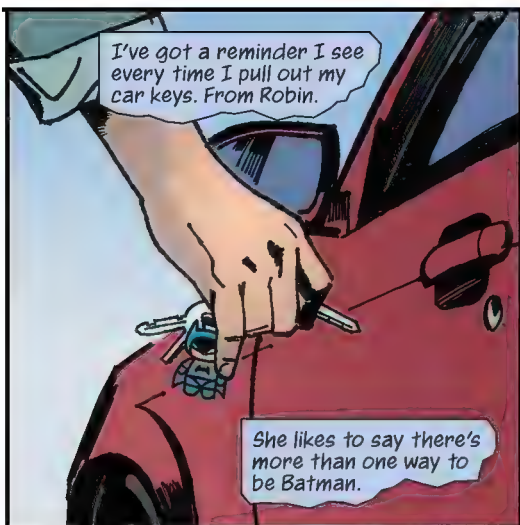
NO, I'M
GOOD. NICE
DAY TO
WALK.



THE **PRU**,
RIGHT?

YEAH.
MEETINGS.
AND YOU'VE
GOT THAT
THING...

THE **GRANT**.
WE'RE REBUILDING
THE ZOO.



I've got a reminder I see every time I pull out my car keys. From Robin.

She likes to say there's more than one way to be Batman.



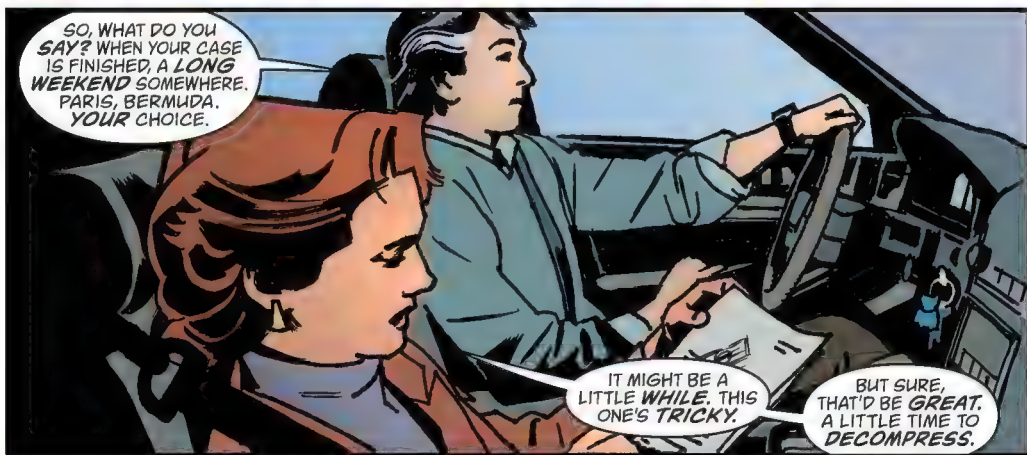
More than one way to make the world better.

And she's right.



HONK BEEP BEEP HONK BEEP HONNNK BEEP BEEP HONK HONK

But there's stuff I don't share with Alfred and my folks, too. Or Robin.



SO, WHAT DO YOU SAY? WHEN YOUR CASE IS FINISHED, A LONG WEEKEND SOMEWHERE. PARIS, BERMUDA. YOUR CHOICE.

IT MIGHT BE A LITTLE WHILE. THIS ONE'S TRICKY.

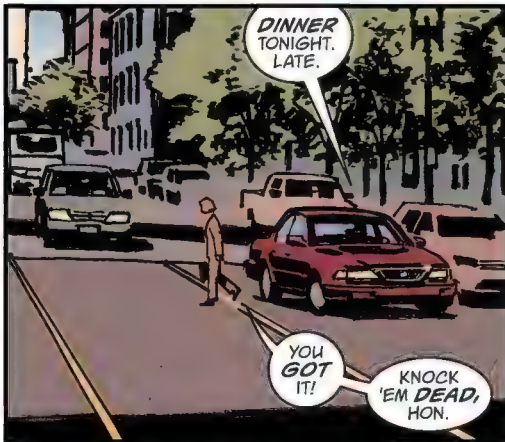
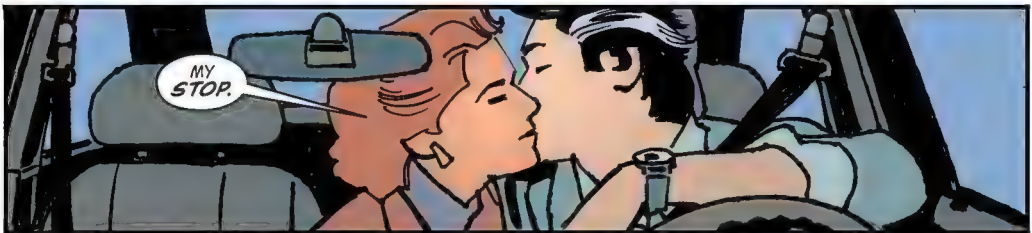
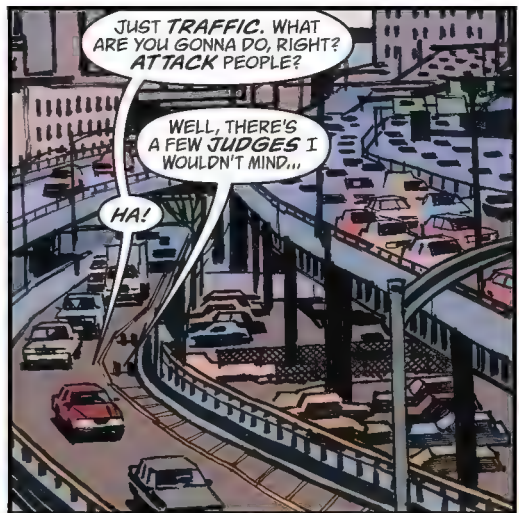
BUT SURE, THAT'D BE GREAT. A LITTLE TIME TO DECOMPRESS.



HONK BEEP HON BEEP HONK BEEP BEEP HONK

HONNNK BEEP HON BEEP BEEP HON

Stuff I still keep to myself.



THE LONG NIGHT

So. Long time, huh?

And for all that you've waited patiently for two years (1) between the first and final issue of this series—and we humbly thank you for that patience and hope you think it was worth it—it's been longer than you know. We wanted to make up for that wait a little with an extra-length finale, and with a little something extra—in this case, the original pitch for the series, written in the wake of the success of *Superman: Secret Identity*, fifteen years ago. Fifteen?! My kids weren't even in first grade yet! It's been a long road indeed. We went through two different artists and a period when I thought the book was dead (and the guy who revived it—thanks, Bob!—has been retired from DC for five years now himself), before bringing the great John Paul Leon on board. And then we had all kinds of difficulties, but here we are, reaching the finale at last. So here's the very beginning...

BATMAN: CREATURE OF THE NIGHT

Four 48-Page Issues

Like *Superman: Secret Identity*, *Batman: Creature of the Night* is an extended look at one of DC's superhero icons from a different perspective, examining the emotional core of the character by translating it into a more realistic setting, removing the trappings of the DCU and exploring beyond the bounds that the action-adventure context usually demands.

Like *Superman: Secret Identity*, it concerns a young man with surface similarities to a DC icon, aware of the character as a comic book character, and how his life is shaped after those similarities become something deeper. Each issue will open with a different stage of the icon's history, and examine a different stage in the lead's development, and the series will have a similar character- and emotion-focused approach, grounded in realistic human drama in order to make the fantasy aspects that much more unearthly and impressive.

Unlike *Superman: Secret Identity*, this is not the story of a man's struggle with identity across the course of his life. Superman is, at heart, about identity, about the hero beneath Clark Kent's surface, about the adolescent ideal of the boy becoming the man. Batman, at heart, taps into something younger and simpler -- it's a child's rage at the world for being unfair, and that child's inarticulate desire to control the world, to make it fair by force of will.

Superman: Secret Identity was an examination of adulthood in a science-fiction setting, a biography of Clark Kent's sense of identity at different stages of his life. *Batman: Creature of the Night*, on the other hand, is a horror story.

It's an examination of obsession at different stages, as a child's rage is set loose on the world, and has to be dealt with by a man who does not stay a child.



Batman: Creature of the Night is the story of Bruce Wainwright, the son of a wealthy couple in a large and old American city (New York, most likely, but maybe Boston). Young Bruce is a comics fan, and has always been fascinated by Batman, in great part because of the similarity of their names. Unlike Clark in *Secret Identity*, he likes the connection, and likes Batman...

...right up until his parents are killed by unknown assailants, and he's left an orphan at age 9.

In anguish and in anger at the world for being so unfair, Bruce wishes there really was a Batman, who could stop things like this. And within a short time ... there is. Unlike the DCU Batman, though, this is not Bruce after years of training and study. This is a supernatural, spectral figure, not fully human, who does all the things Batman does by illusion -- comes and goes like a ghost, vanishes in to the shadows and more. This is a scary, unkillable Batman who exists for one reason and one reason only: To make the world fair, by Bruce's nine-year-old standards.

Again, as with *Secret Identity*, we'll offer an explanation as to what happened but never really confirm it: Bruce would have been a twin, except that during gestation, as occasionally happens, one fetus absorbs the other, taking it back into itself. This has possibly left Bruce with a "psychic twin," a bodiless

brother who had no real existence until Bruce's grief and rage gave him form.

Bruce's need to deal with this obsession-driven side of himself is what will shape the story.

The only other major characters I'm sure of so far are:

- Alfred, who in this story is not a butler, but a longtime employee of Bruce's father and the trustee of the Wainwright Estate. He acts in loco parentis to Bruce, and while his job is to safeguard Bruce's financial future, he comes to see himself as responsible for Bruce on a wider scale, to see him grow up well-balanced and happy.
- A police detective (not named Gordon) who investigates the Wainwrights' murder and becomes a friend to Bruce and an odd sort of ally to Batman. He's not sure whether he believes there's a supernatural being out there preying on criminals, but he likes the results -- particularly since Batman doesn't kill.

There will be women, probably one who Bruce winds up with in the end, but his obsession prevents him from letting anyone in and his wealth allows him to live a shallow life, so he won't be making any deep connections quickly.

The story will roughly break down like this:

#1: The birth of the obsession. The story of Bruce's childhood and the murder, and the debut of Batman. The turning point at the end is Bruce coming face-to-face with Batman and realizing that they're linked, that Batman is born of him.

#2: Living with the obsession, kidding yourself that it's not a problem. Bruce thinks he's doing a good thing, making his city safe. Batman is doing good, making the streets safe. Bruce is a young man by now, starting to get involved in business, and it's as if he's got the Midas touch. Everything goes right, everything works. The turning point at the end is Bruce realizing that Batman is still protecting him, still making the world "fair" by making Bruce's wishes come true -- Batman is ruining his competitors to ensure Bruce's business success.

#3: Wrestling with the obsession; can it be overcome. Bruce has to try to put the genie back in the bottle. But can he? Should he? How many people are alive today, how many criminals are off the streets, thanks to Batman? Bruce starts to find out more about Batman as he looks for ways to control him, learns about his never-born twin. Can he kill off his own brother, after killing him in the womb? Bruce's feelings of guilt and responsibility start tearing his life apart. By the end of the issue, Bruce takes Batman into himself, seemingly conquering him. But shortly thereafter, Bruce disappears, leaving a note telling Alfred not to look for him.

#4: Bruce is living on the streets, a physical and emotional wreck. All his efforts go into holding Batman in, and he's not entirely successful. But when Batman gets out, he's more savage than ever. He's fighting to survive, just as Bruce is fighting to kill him. Bruce has to come to terms with the reason for his obsession before he can truly deal with it -- with the idea that adults take care of themselves, that it's by accepting the risk of failure and taking responsibility for ourselves that we become adults, that the world is what we, individually and collectively, make it, not something that's made safe for us, like a terrarium. Only then can he truly let his obsession go, and start to apply some of the lessons he's learned -- using his fortune to help people make the world better, doing





it through effort rather than wishing someone would impose it from the outside.

In the end, Bruce has gone from a traumatized child wishing the world could be forced into fairness to an adult making his own best efforts to improve things. Alfred would most likely have died by this point, leaving Bruce with a grave to stand over, to react to as an adult. And the police detective may be a captain by now (or even commissioner), and is still going to make use of whatever tools are available to him to do the job. He may not have Batman as a dark angel of vengeance, but he's got Bruce as a benefactor to the city.

A few general thoughts:

Bruce and his parents may be major benefactors to the local zoo, both to give Bruce a reason to hang around the bat exhibits and to make the distinction later in the series that animals in the zoo are taken care of like children, but adults take care of themselves.

I'm tempted to have the whole thing narrated by Alfred, up until he dies, whereupon Bruce finishes it off after reading Alfred's journals. That's partially because I've always liked the way most of Nevil Shute's novels are narrated by an older man who witnesses the drama but is at a remove from it, and partially because it allows us to see Bruce as traumatized and shallow and defensive from the outside as well as the inside. But it may be that won't work.

There will also be a revelation in #3 -- a false one -- that it was Bruce who caused the Wainwrights' death himself, as a means of letting Batman be born. Batman doesn't kill, but there's a third face to this obsession, the face of the Joker, who symbolizes the madness that makes Batman necessary. This would all be devastating to Bruce, and would be what drives him to disappear at the end of #3, but it's not true, it's Bruce's obsession warping his view of reality as a means of preserving itself.

Aside from that being a cool revelation and an emotional bombshell, it solves one of the problems of the series, which is that if there really is this creepy force out there doing good, why not just lock Bruce up somewhere and let him do it? Is Bruce's sanity more important than the lives of those who'll die without Batman? If Batman grows more warped over time as he fights to stay "alive," then yes, he's demonstrably dangerous. And it'll make for a nice emotional moment as Bruce stands up to Batman in #4, not letting his obsession control him any longer.

As you can see, this isn't all worked out yet, but the basics of it are there, at least.



Not all worked out at all! I didn't even have Robin yet!

And we changed quite a bit along the way—it was John Paul's suggestion that our Officer Gordon (who we wound up naming Gordon after all) not be the helpful ally I'd originally intended, which turned out to be a very fruitful decision that gave the story a lot more shadowy texture and intriguing tangles. And my original "Joker" plans fell by the wayside as the story got more nuanced and realistic, not quite so overtly symbolic. (Or at least, I think that's what happened; I no longer remember what I'd had in mind for that Joker reference, other than what's there in the pitch.)

I hope you like the result, and I have to give huge thanks to John Paul Leon, who not only immersed himself in this world—making the story dramatic, emotional, and utterly beautiful—but transformed it by asking the right questions and making great suggestions. (When I didn't know where to put the finale, for instance, he's the guy who said: "How about bringing it back full circle? End it at the zoo.") And to Joey Cavalieri, for starting it all up, Chris Conroy for seeing it through, Bob Wayne for asking me "Whatever happened to that Batman thing? Can we get that going again?", Todd Klein for masterful lettering and great design suggestions, and everyone at DC for being incredibly patient and believing in the book.

And all of you, too. Thanks very much for being here. It's been a pleasure telling our tale of wishes come true and the dark side they can bring with them...

—Kurt Busiek
October 2019



THE BOY WHO LOVES BATMAN

Bruce Wainwright was a happy nine-year-old, obsessed with Batman comics, imagining what it must be like to be the Dark Knight. His world crumbles when his parents are killed in a robbery gone wrong. Orphaned, he is sent to a private boarding school, where he broods.

He thirsts for vengeance and has no outlet, not in a world that lacks superheroes. Bruce desperately wishes for a Batman to bestow vengeance on those cowardly criminals. And sometimes, wishes come true.

A bat-like creature finds his parents' killers, beginning the most unimaginable odyssey of all. Bruce is shocked as this dark angel of justice follows him through the years, and he takes comfort that something is dealing with the criminals even as he thirsts for understanding.

Who is this benefactor—is he a force for good or something else?

Bruce's repressed anger, bottled up since childhood, may erupt and destroy not only him but also the good people of Boston.

A study in psychological obsession and a tale of a lost little boy, this is also a thriller as the bat-shaped creature stalks the guilty, meting out rough justice.

Batman: Creature of the Night is a unique story, set beyond DC Comics continuity, written by **Kurt Busiek** (*Superman: Secret Identity*, *Astro City*) and illustrated by **John Paul Leon** (*Mother Panic*).

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